Do you like gossip? Does gossip about dead people interest you? How about gossip about people who are dead but at one time were famous? Then this is for you.

—Notes from *From the Journals of Jean Seberg* that were not used in the final film

The major and most interesting part of film history is gossip: who was almost in which film, which film would have gotten made if only so-and-so had been in it and especially who slept with whom. Film history is a very, very long gossip column.

—*From the Journals of Jean Seberg*

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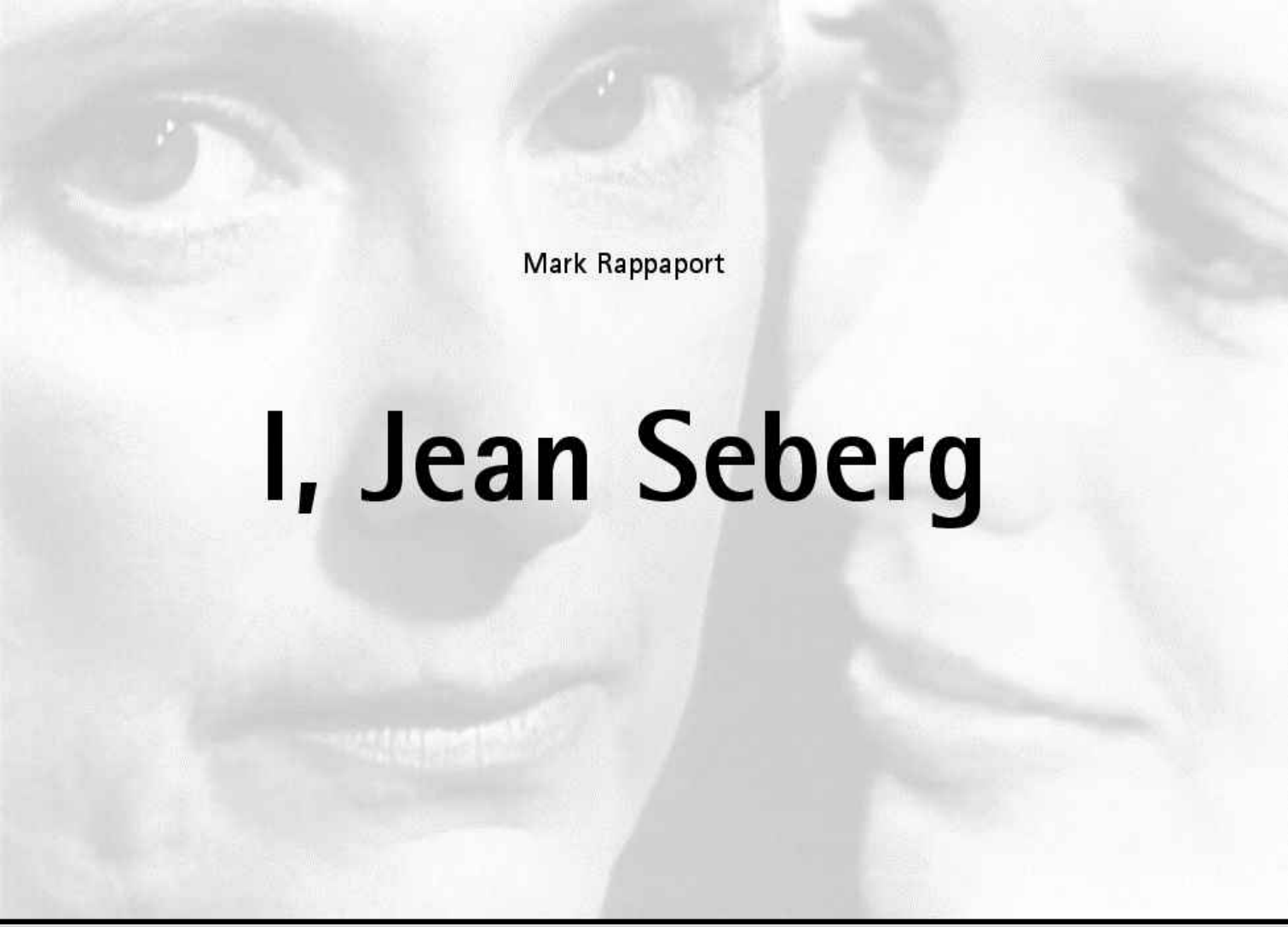


Mark Rappaport

I, Jean Seberg

BEFORE I STARTED the Seberg film, I had written pages and pages of notes about various subjects that I knew the film would deal with: Joan of Arc, Jane Fonda, Clint Eastwood, *Lilith*, Godard and Gorin's *Letter to Jane*, and the Kuleshov effect. They were stream-of-consciousness maunderings that were way too long to use in the film once I started the actual editing—little mini-essays which had to be cut, abbreviated, and rearranged if they were to be used as entries from Jean Seberg's "journals." These are some of the unedited notes, some parts of which worked their way into the script, dancing in and out, like a very perverse call and response, to a barrage of film clips. I think that they are sufficiently different from the film so as not to seem redundant even if you've seen it. And if you haven't, they might make you want to.

Notes on Jane

In *Barbarella,* Jane does the first striptease in outer space, captured for earthly mortals in *Playboy*. She plays the first intergalactic sex kitten. Roger Vadim parades her around in a variety of S&M costumes suggesting a wide variety of overlapping fetishes for the delectation of a presumably drooling, all-male audience. Vadim, who made *And God Created Woman,* which made his then wife Brigitte Bardot a world-famous movie star almost overnight, clearly enjoyed displaying his wives' and girlfriends' charms to a mass audience, hoping that they, as spectators, would occupy the place he usually did. When Jane threw her hat into the ring as a serious actress, none of this was held against her. But it's also true that she was recognized as a serious actress only *after* she played a hooker—combining the best of both worlds. Although she publicly apologized for championing the cause of North Vietnam, she never apologized for playing bimbos. How come Hanoi was held against her, but when she became a feminist, *Barbarella* wasn't? I guess your politics are recognized as a function of the real world, whereas movie roles are recognized as an economic necessity, a job like any other, that you have to take. Everyone has to pay the rent.

In 1992 I finished my film *Rock Hudson's Home Movies*, which I called "a fictitious autobiography." Hudson, back from the dead, played by an actor, is young once again, and comments on various aspects of his career and his closeted sexuality, and how and where the two intersected. At the time I transferred the footage from videos of *Rock Hudson*, I also transferred hours of material about the representation of art and artists in American films. I planned to make a clip-film about the way Hollywood claims to worship, but actually reviles, art and artists, often at the very same time. It was to be called "Art Is Just a Guy's Name," taken from a line of Rock Hudson's in *Magnificent Obsession*, when he proudly declares his disinterest in all things artistic. I had collected an assortment of real gems, including Joan Bennett in *Scarlet Street* ordering Edward G. Robinson, since he's a painter, to paint her toenails. She drawls sardonically, in the way that only Bennett could, "They'll be masterpieces!" And then there's Deborah Kerr, in *An Affair to Remember*, playing an accident victim who will never walk again, chirping optimistically and without a trace of irony to Cary Grant, who had always wanted to be a painter: "If you can paint, I can walk!" I edited about 15 minutes of the material, which I thought was interesting and fun, and I realized that only about ten other people in the whole world would be interested in this examination of Hollywood's deeply conflicted relationship to all things cultural. I decided, since so much more work was required to make the piece into the feature-length work I envisioned, it wasn't worth the trouble. I abandoned it.

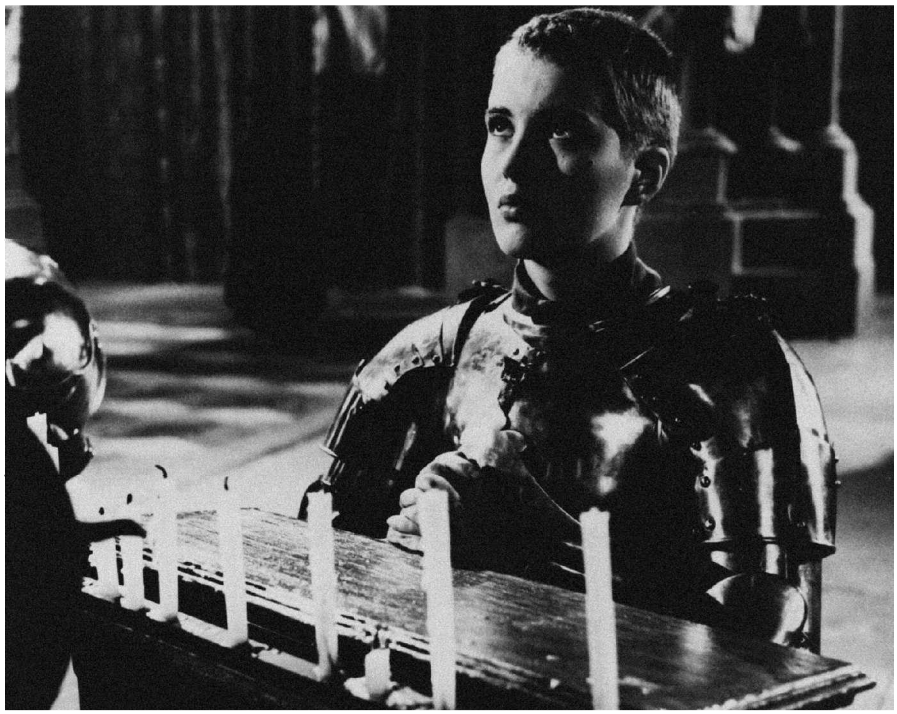
Around the same time, I read that Jodie Foster was planning to do a film about the life of Jean Seberg, with Foster herself playing Seberg. That really touched a nerve. I thought to myself, What the hell does she know about Seberg? To her, Seberg was just a historical anecdote, whereas Jean Seberg was a very important figure in my life at the movies. I was a child when Preminger announced that he was scouring the planet for an unknown actress to play Saint Joan. Even though I didn't see the film when it was released, I remember very vividly all the hoopla surrounding that well-publicized search for a new face. Just because she studied French at Yale didn't give Foster the right to lay claim to Seberg's life. Seberg's life and mine—as a viewer—intersected in too many ways for me to give her up without a battle. Maybe it's not the best motivation for making a movie—a grudge fuck—but, hey, it worked. I was going to beat Foster at her own game and make my film first. And I did.

A filmmaker friend who had made a very well-received documentary that no one went to see had a great idea for me after he saw the film. In the ads for *Jean Seberg*, under the title, he said, it should proudly proclaim itself "An Essay." Right. What do people go to even less than they go to documentaries? Essays. I didn't take his generous advice. But I don't think anyone was fooled, either.

Notes on Joan

Joan of Arc is to films what *Macbeth* is to the theater. It has a curse on it. Traditionally, everything goes wrong in any stage production of *Macbeth*. As for *Joan of Arc*, nothing good happens to anyone who plays St. Joan in the movies. Falconetti, who played in Dreyer's *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc,* never acted in another film. She was so indelibly associated with the part that she consumed her own image in Dreyer's film. And Ingrid Bergman? At the height of her popularity in

Overleaf: Mary Beth Hurt (with Jean Seberg) plays Jean Seberg in *From the Journals of Jean Seberg.*



Seberg in *Saint Joan*

America, after having played Joan of Arc on stage and on screen, she had an affair with Roberto Rossellini and left her husband and infant daughter to live with him. Add to that that she became pregnant with Rossellini's child while he was still married to another woman and before he and Bergman were married. These transgressions ended her American career for almost a decade. She was vilified in the press and from the pulpit, and was virtually excommunicated from movie theaters in the U.S. Her second Joan was in Rossellini's *Joan at the Stake,* at the end of their relationship. It didn't do either of them any good. It was the last of the five-and-a-half films they did together, during which time she didn't do films with anyone else because he didn't want her to. I wonder if she ever regretted not having appeared in Visconti's *Senso* opposite Marlon Brando.

The curse of Joan of Arc extends even beyond the actress who plays her on the screen. A subcategory should be added—actresses who play Joan of Arc in the movie within the movie that they're in. Lucia Bosè, in Antonioni's *La Signora senza Camelie,* plays a former shopgirl who, because of her looks, makes it big as a movie glamour-queen of the sex-and-sandal variety. She lets her husband talk her into making an art film as bid for artistic respectability—the life of Joan of Arc—which effectively ends their marriage and her career. Alida Valli, in *The Miracle of the Bells,* plays an aspiring actress who lands the role of Joan of Arc. Even though she is great in it, she dies before the movie is released. The producer refuses to release the movie: her death is a bad omen and it's bad for box office. Who wants to see a dead would-be star? It takes the miracle of the title to make him change his mind. The point is, playing Joan is bad for your health.

And, of course, there's my story, I who had everything in the world—the most coveted screen role a girl could hope for, instant fame and success and then, a year later, international flopdom, failing very publicly when the movie was released. I was burned at the stake again when the reviews came out. Then I made my way back and, I suppose, I lived my life like most people, with the usual highs and lows—until I was 30, when the lows took over. The curse of Joan took over and didn't end until I committed suicide ten years later. Do me a favor: don't invite me to be the guest speaker at any Joan of Arc film festival.

I was on the check-out line at the grocery, if you can call a high-priced, snobby food store a grocery. A woman ahead of me said that after seeing the film, she got herself a Jean Seberg haircut. Someone I've been friends with told me the same thing. I didn't think about it much but I guess it was flattering, although it really had nothing to do with me.

I had just finished editing and writing the video rough cut of the Seberg film. All the spaces where the actress was to appear were just black leader, with my voice standing in for what would be the actress's

voice. Before this version was completed, it was almost useless to try to look for an actress—there would be nothing to show her. There was someone in experimental theater whom I had seen a few years earlier who actually did look like Jean Seberg. And she was wonderful in the material that she and her partner had written. Through a friend, I was able to track her down in London. I had been dreaming of this actress as my ideal Jean Seberg for a year and a half. She came back to the United States briefly because her mother was ill, and we met. Even though she looked the part, as a Jean Seberg who had gained weight and aged somewhat, I knew from the first lines out of her mouth that it wouldn't work. Everything she said seemed flat and dull, the way it is when the wrong actor is reading your material.

My casting director kept promising me people, but she never arranged for meetings. Though I did meet one young actress, who has subsequently become a little well known (maybe by the time this is printed, she will be even more well known), and I realized the film would not be nearly as effective with her. I wanted an older actress, someone who continued the aging process after Seberg died. It would, I felt, add a poignancy and piquancy to what she was saying. To have a young woman muse about various disasters in her life, disasters that still loomed ahead of her, didn't make a lot of sense. It was less than four weeks to the time I had to shoot—the unfinished film had been invited to a film festival and I had a very tight deadline—and there was a great deal of script for the actress to memorize. Strangely enough, I wasn't the least bit anxious about finding someone, even though there was so little time.

Anyway, after I finished the rough cut, I went out and, in a celebratory mood, bought some cookies. Even though I'm not supposed to eat things like that (is anyone, over the age of 20?), I wolfed down the whole box. As I knew it would—as someone who has hypoglycemia and tries, if not always successfully, to stay away from sweets—it made me drowsy, and I wanted to take a nap. When I woke up, the first thing I did was rush over to a film reference book and look up Mary Beth Hurt. Either in a dream or upon waking, her name had come to me, and I thought she would be the perfect person to play an older Jean Seberg. The only reason I tell this story is not to suggest that sweets, although they may be bad for you, can also have good side effects or that the best casting ideas come when you're unconscious, but something else. In the reference book it said that Mary Beth Hurt was born in Marshalltown, Iowa—the same city where Jean Seberg was born. Bingo! I was positive that she was going to do it. It turned out that Seberg had babysat Hurt, and Hurt remembered going to the parade welcoming Seberg back for the screening of *Saint Joan* in Marshalltown. In any case, that kind of luck or chance or synchronicity or whatever you want to call it can't be looked for, hoped for, or asked for. It happens or it doesn't. You don't go after it. It will come after you. When I think about it, I don't know what I would have done if Mary Beth Hurt hadn't agreed to play the part.

Notes on Jean-Luc, Jane, and Jean

What else did I have in common with Jane Fonda, aside from the fact that I jokingly called myself the poor man's Jane Fonda? We were both in movies by Godard. But nobody deserved what he did to her after she was in *Tout va bien*. After the film, she went to Vietnam and was photographed with North Vietnamese peasants. The photograph made the front page of every newspaper in the world. "Star Consorts with Communist Guerillas!" And, of course, the way it was reported, Jane, not the Vietnam War, was the event. Godard couldn't forgive her for that. But instead of talking about her trip, he excoriates her as if it were her doing—as if she were waging the war on North Vietnam, as if she had taken the picture with her tragic-looking face in perfect focus in the foreground and the peasants blurred and relegated to the background, as if she had personally written the captions in every newspaper and magazine. He, along with Jean-Pierre Gorin, drafted his poison-pen *Letter to Jane*. She, not the photographers or the merchandisers of the photograph, became the villain. Nor could he forgive the fact that she was rich, a celebrity, a movie star, and especially a woman. Don't tell me he would have done a similar hatchet job on a man. I don't believe it for a second. This, after all, was the man who wanted me to rifle through Belmondo's pockets as he lay dying on the street. Jane's real crime, in addition to the other offences, was that she was a bleeding-heart liberal, not a Marxist-Leninist, and totally unschooled in radical rhetoric. The common perception is that actors are dolts, unable to think for themselves if they don't have their lines written out for them. Well, after seeing Jane on TV defending her trip to Hanoi, I'm not sure I disagreed. But she got better at it the more she did it. And, I guess, that's the point. When you become involved and discuss the issues a lot, you do get better at it. But at that time anyone could lay an elephant trap for her. I mean, after

all, Godard *wanted* her in *Tout va bien* because she *was* an American movie star. Then trashing her was like calling a woman you've slept with a whore because she had the bad judgment to sleep with you. There's always a sexual aspect to these so-called political vendettas. For example, what the FBI did to me because I had slept with black men.

My worst fear was that Godard would do the same number on me in relation to my involvement with the Panthers. But I guess the Panthers didn't mean so much to him as a French intellectual. In fact, the French found the Panthers sexy. Genet certainly did. And Vietnam was always an open wound with the French. After all, they lost it first. Then we went in and lost it again, under a new name. But they could afford to be self-righteous about it. Our atrocities were world-class news, theirs were merely a continuation and an extension of nineteenth-century colonialist policies. Perhaps they would have done better to be more outspoken about problems in their own backyard—Algeria, for example.

I was afraid Godard would crucify me. But it never happened. I guess, unlike Jane, I was small potatoes.

A couple of film critics mentioned that I neglected to cite *Letter to Jane*. I thought the film too obscure to refer to—a diversionary little sidetrip that would not be interesting to a larger audience. Also, I didn't want to have to deal, in the editing room, with a film I find really hateful.

In David Richards' 1981 biography of Jean Seberg, he mentions her first serious boyfriend, a young actor from Texas whom she met in summer stock. They played in William Inge's *Picnic* together and fell in love. The guy's name was John Maddox. Now years ago, in the late 60s, I had a job on a documentary about killer sharks. This was way before *Jaws*. I was the sound editor, and because the editing team was working on the film by day, I had to come in at night and add the glug-glug-glug to every breath that anyone took underwater. I found the job excruciating. I would transfer sounds from the master tapes to 35mm and lay them in. For amusement, I would poke around in the office refrigerator and nibble at the food. The point of this story is that the editor of the film was a John Maddox who came from Texas. He was a handsome guy and very quiet, with a pleasant gravelly-tenor voice and the trace of a Texas accent. But with a quietness that also suggested a roiling rage underneath. I sensed he was very unhappy and that he felt he was destined for more interesting things in life than cutting banal nature documentaries. It was almost physical—the unarticulated aching for something else that he radiated. In reality, I didn't know very much about him except that he loved the Beatles and that he always had very beautiful girlfriends. He certainly never mentioned Jean Seberg. How do I know that this was the same John Maddox? My John Maddox, several years later, without having had any previous sailing experience, decided to sail by himself down the North Atlantic coast—in the middle of the winter!—all the way to the Caribbean. He was never heard from again. When the book mentions that Seberg's Maddox was lost in the Bermuda Triangle, I knew it was in fact the same person. But I learned something else as well—how an act that, even at that time, I thought was a terrible suicidal impulse dressed up as desperate macho posturing can be seen as something adventurous and even romantic. To say that he disappeared in the Bermuda Triangle is a bit of fanciful eyewash that biographers and readers of gossip columns are so enamoured of. The truth or, rather, another truth, the one that I was familiar with, is much uglier but more to the point. But maybe I'm being harsher and more ungenerous than John deserved. Or is this the kind of situation in which one can genuinely say, "When the legend becomes fact, print the legend"? In any case, this is how rumors and tall tales and even myths are born. Poor John. Poor Jean. If only they both could have remained young and in love forever . . .

Notes on Lilith and Women and Depression

You know, I've never believed those statistics that women are more depressed than men. It's partly the way they measure depression and the expression of depression. If a man drinks too much and totals his car and takes a couple of people with him in the ensuing wreck, that's called . . . Well, what *is* it called? Drunk driving? Antisocial behavior? It's never called manslaughter or, heaven forbid, suicide. If a guy is on a bell tower with a high-powered rifle, picking off people at random, he's not depressed. He's just . . . what? A psychopath, a sociopath? A loner, a loser? But he evades the classification of depression. Women who have prescriptions for valium, however, never do. Women need "mother's little helpers"; men need guns and bullets. I don't believe the statistics for a minute. You, a woman, walk into the doctor's office and whatever your ailment, if it can't be seen, cut off, or cut out, they describe it as psychosomatic. And then there

Seberg in *Lilith*

are all those movies about crazy women. All made by men, of course. The Blanche Dubois syndrome. I played my fair share of them and that was good for me, as an actress. It's always more fun to play someone off the deep end. But how come it's always women who've gone over the edge? Natalie Wood in *Splendor in the Grass,* Catherine Deneuve in *Repulsion*. And Robert Altman's *Images,* with Susannah York. Me playing Lilith. Me in *Dead of Summer,* in which I play a woman who wanders around in a trance for the whole movie, wondering where her husband is and then, at the end, it turns out I killed him. Anyone ever see Schönberg's "Erwartung"? Women, in case you haven't noticed, only go crazy over love and aging. Men, in movies anyway, don't go crazy. They just want more—power, money, guns, whatever.

Actors can't afford to question the ideology, the meaning, the ultimate what-is-it-all-about? of the script. If they did, would they ever be able to act in anything? No, when you read a script, you have to wear blinders. You read it to see if there's anything there for you, if there's anything you feel you can do with the lines on the page. Salary, of course, is not an inconsiderable consideration. I've played the whore more than once. I had a family to support—a child and a nanny, lawyers, agents, accountants. Everyone has to be paid. And sometimes you work just to pay them. Movie stars are no different from other people. OK. I played those parts. They were offered to me. I took them. Isn't that what actors do? That's what I did.

An arts journalist camouflaged in floppy hat and sunglasses told me after a press screening that she had auditioned for the role of Saint Joan but I shouldn't tell anyone else. She didn't share this confidence with the people she worked with because then they would know how old she was. She had no memories of her audition.

My then wife and I were both fans of Jean Seberg. Before she and I met, we both saw and fell in love with *The Five-Day Lover*, a bittersweet Mozartian comedy with an ending so sad and unnerving it feels like a punch in the guts. Somewhere around the time that I was working with Maddox, my wife and I went to see *Dead of Summer*, on 57th Street, at a theater that is no longer there. We went together to see *Birds in Peru*, which Seberg's then husband, Romain Gary, wrote and directed. Even in 1968, it was a dismal, embarrassing affair. The theater where it was playing on Avenue B and 13th Street is no longer there. We went to see Seberg in the underrated *Paint your Wagon*, in which she co-starred with Clint Eastwood and Lee Marvin, a huge, overproduced movie that overwhelms the modest be-

havioral charm of the three actors, who are even more charming, especially Lee and Clint, when they raise their untrained, unassuming voices in song. We went to see it in one of those old movie palaces on Delancey Street. It, too, needless to say, is gone. All these theaters that no longer exist, which played movies that no one remembers, and even those of us who remember them only remember shards and slivers, imperfectly framed images, parts of scenes and snippets of dialogue—where do these forgotten memories go? But even if nothing else remains, Seberg I remember. Let me put it another way—it was the Sebergness of Seberg that sticks with one decades later.

I am giving you my credentials as to why me rather than Jodie Foster. Seberg was part of my life in a way that no other movie star ever was, or ever will be again. Even though young cinephiles at that time avidly followed the careers of Anouk Aimée and Françoise Dorléac and, especially, Jeanne Moreau, it was Jean, partly because she was an American who straddled two worlds and became part of the charmed world of French culture, who really mattered in a very personal way. I don't remember having heard of her death until much later. In the late 70s I was very busy making one movie after another and I never read the newspapers. And it was long before I started reading the *New York Times* obituaries on a regular basis.

Later, someone I know who was doing research on Seberg for Foster's film told me Foster abandoned the project because it was clearly going to be too sordid and too dirty. It wasn't simply the simple story of a girl from Marshalltown, Iowa, who becomes a star in France and then is hounded to death by J. Edgar Hoover. Jodie wouldn't be able to use her excellent college French to portray a woman who was merely a victim of a right-wing political conspiracy. There were too many lovers, too many bottles, too many suicide attempts—all too sordid for a Hollywood movie.

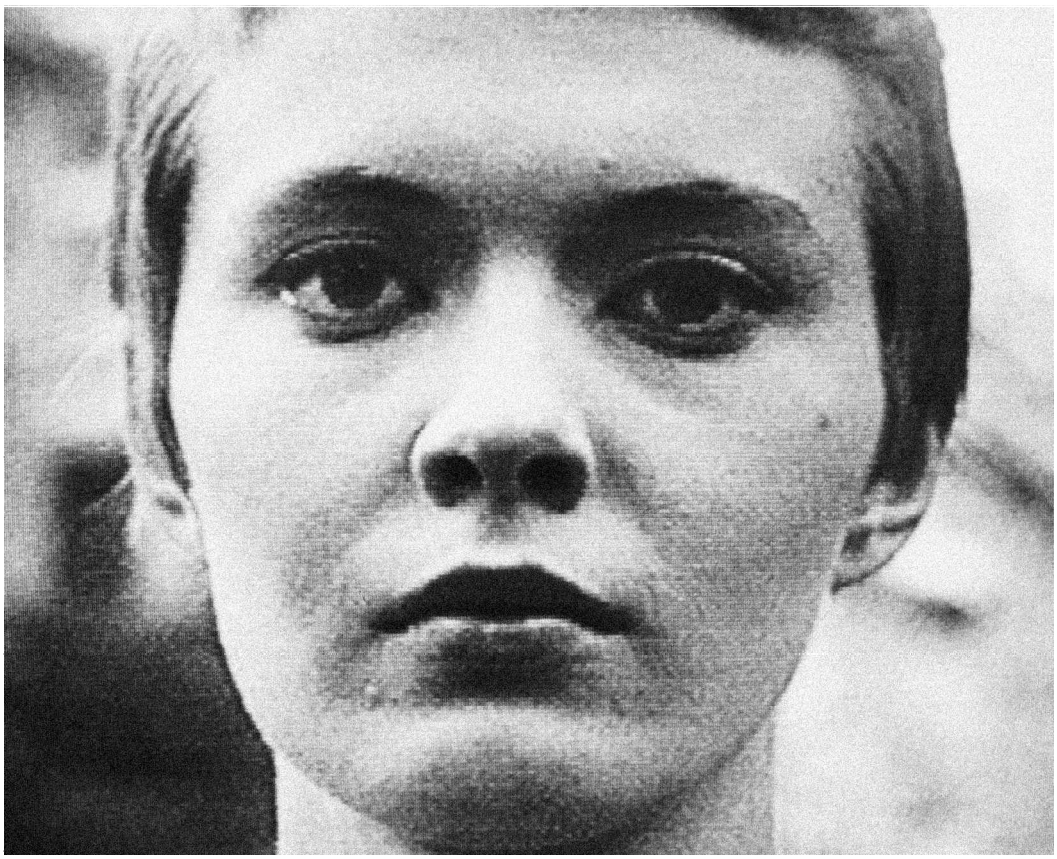
Notes on Romain and His Father

Although Romain talked about his mother, he never talked about his father. With good reason. He barely knew his father. He was an illegitimate child, but an illegitimate child who had an extraordinary father. His father was an actor in pre-Revolutionary Russian films. After the Revolution, Ivan Mouzhukhin fled to France, where he became a very big star in silent movies. But he was a casualty of the sound era: his thick Russian accent betrayed him. In many ways, his story was not unlike Romain's—an outsider everywhere, a Russian Jew in France. Romain, a citizen of the world, almost fit in everywhere but really never did. There was always something wrong. In France, he was Jewish, and of Russian-Polish descent. In America, he was French. Everywhere he lived, he was always missing something, maybe because he was a bastard.

I never met him, the father. He died broke and forgotten, in the year that I was born, the same year in which *Gone with the Wind, Ninotchka,* and *The Wizard of Oz* were made. But even more interesting to me was his place in film history. He had a key role in Russian Formalist film theory and history. There was a famous experiment about the nature of film acting and its relation to editing in which Kuleshov, the author of the experiment, shows a man's face devoid of expression, and intercuts his face with a child playing, then with a man in a coffin, with a plate of soup, suggesting that, to the audience, the man's expression is really colored by what he seems to be seeing—that movie acting is an act of neutrality and blankness, and context becomes everything. To react properly, that is to say neutrally, is as important as emoting. To look is as significant an action as feeling. And for the audience, because of the juxtaposition of various elements, seeing is more important than what one actually knows. Film acting can and often does reside in what is cut out and what connections are made when you cut from a face to another object, person, or situation. Mouzhukhin was the actor in that experiment. He was a personal link to the beginnings of film history—he was in pre-Soviet movies as early as 1910—and, of course, the experiment fascinated me. None of it has survived, unfortunately. But here's Mouzhukhin, who even if you didn't know it, you would have to recognize as Romain's father. The resemblance is uncanny. There are very few secrets in a face. It always tells more than it wants to, no matter how it tries to hide. That was the story of my face, too. It seems to be a mystery, for those who are looking for that sort of thing, but it is totally open. If it has a meaning, I'm not sure what that meaning might be.

At one point, my distributor and I thought if a prominent film magazine was interested in the film, maybe we could arrange to have the American premiere in Marshalltown, Iowa, and they could cover it. It would become an event. And then we could get *People* magazine to cover it, as well. And "Entertainment Tonight" too. These are the kind of nutty thoughts you have when you're trying to rustle up publicity on a film. Well, it never happened. Eventually, however, the film was shown in Marshalltown. We were told that Seberg's father

From the Journals of Jean Seberg



Seberg looks back

came to see it. I did have some kind of momentary fantasy about him calling to say he saw it and loved it. But then I thought, Wait a minute, it's his *daughter*. He wouldn't even be seeing a film *about* his daughter—for him, in all likelihood, it would be an opportunity to see a parade of film clips he's never seen in which his daughter figures prominently. Whatever his response would be, it wouldn't have anything to do with me or the film I made. I hope that he didn't dislike it, though.

For years now everyone has been talking and writing about how important a role memoirs have been playing on the contemporary literary scene. After all, everyone has at least *one* story to tell. And we haven't heard all six billion of them. Yet. And since everyone is doing it, they can't be that hard to write. And if you were even merely semi-famous but were an abused child or a person who triumphed over a severe disability, there's probably a pot of gold at the end of the bestseller list for you. What I never understood, and this must be a deficiency on my part, is why anyone considers a biography or an autobiography more truthful than fiction. The order, the arrangement, the details, the emphasis in any biography or autobiography add color and weight and meaning to a process that, by its very nature, becomes a very artificial simulation of a highly subjective, and selective, "truth." If truth can be found anywhere, and I doubt that it can, why would anyone look for it in an autobiography? And how could anyone recognize it in such a self-serving format? It certainly isn't in the recounting of anecdotes that in their retelling get sharper and more shapely and more amusing than the original incident they are supposed to describe. The nature of representing any given reality is an effort destined to failure. But in the fiction of the movies, now *there* at least some truths can be found. You can describe what you see in the film a million different ways, but when you show a clip from a movie, even though you are showing an isolated fragment, you can't change the camera angle, the acting, the lighting, the framing, the dialogue, the action that is shown on the screen, and it all has a kind of validity that any description of it is bound to betray. So, I'll tell the story of Jean Seberg, illustrated, as before, with clips from films, and pretend that she is telling it. Let it be a memoir, although it's not my life. Let me write her memoirs. And the film clips will, if nothing else, provide a level of accuracy that most memoirs can only dream of.

Notes on the Face, the Look

What did I have that was so special? Well, of course, every actor thinks he or she has it in spades. Movie actors have to think they have it to an even larger degree than people who act on the stage. The face is everything. It must be read like a book. It's in the eyes, it's in the skin. Maybe it was presumptuous of me, a small-town girl from Iowa, to think that I had what Dietrich had, what Garbo had, what Monroe had. All I knew was I had the energy, the drive, and the need. The rest would come later. And, of course, Mr. Preminger's choice of me to play the lead in *Saint Joan* indicated something, even though it was a something he would repudiate later. I did have something. And if being a movie star is about having a face that the camera loves to look at, but more importantly a face that audiences are interested in watching, I was some kind of movie star.

But I was something else as well. I was the first star that looked back. The first thing they tell you when you begin acting in the movies is, Never look at the camera. When you look at the camera, it seems as if you are looking into the eyes of each member of the audience, and of course the illusion of life being unobtrusively observed is shattered. I, on the other hand, was encouraged to return the camera's unblinking stare. I looked back as much as I was looked at. No one in film history had such luscious closeups as Dietrich or Garbo. It was almost as if their films were afterthoughts, merely vehicles to get these gorgeous faces into situations where they could be lavishly and fetishistically photographed. It was as if reasons had to be invented to have new lighting set-ups, different hairdos, more hats—in order to study the already familiar faces in unfamiliar contexts. But that was another time—the studio system, the golden age of Hollywood. I arrived in the film world when the idolatry accorded to stars was over, when the studio system was already in decline and the explosion of foreign films suggested new possibilities about how to make films and, more importantly, what they could be about. I was the star or, better yet, the anti-star of that era. The camera looked at me, but I was aware of it. And audiences understood that when I was being looked at, I knew that I was being looked at. But when the camera looked at me, what did it see? A riddle waiting to be solved, a mystery about to be uncovered, an enigma that refused to give up its secrets? How did I know that I had this in me? I didn't. But the camera knew. If Garbo or Dietrich were the most looked-

at women—the camera gazing lovingly on them as if they were artifacts from some alien planet—the camera lingered obsessively on me as well. Maybe the reasons were different, but the impulse was still the same. To crack the mystery, to get to the heart of it, whatever it was, to dissect the soul. My unembarrassed return serve was an ironic mockery of such a futile attempt.

When I was making the film, I thought only five or six people in the world would be interested in seeing it. And I knew who most of those people were. While I was making the film, I didn't actively seek out people who knew Seberg—it wasn't going to be that kind of movie in any case—but people who came forward with stories about her were people who had known her only in the very distant past. After the movie was shown, suddenly *every*one came out of the woodwork to tell me awful stories about her. One man who claimed he was a friend of the agent of one of the three young women who were finalists in Preminger's *Saint Joan* run-offs—he never mentioned her name and I didn't ask—told me that the only reason Seberg got the part was that she was the only one of the three who agreed to sleep with Preminger. Even if this story is true, did I want or need to hear it? Another person, a jazz maven, told me that she had an affair with a famous jazz musician. I didn't know. Would I have mentioned it if I did? I doubt it. A French actress I was introduced to a year after I made the film said I should have contacted so-and-so, a world-famous director, and he would have told me many stories about Seberg, since they had had an affair. In fact, this actress was interested in telling me stories as well since the director threw her over for Seberg.

The film was an invitation for a lot of people to tell me a lot of unsavory anecdotes. Somehow if the celebrity is an abstraction, the stories of the various affairs are like notices in a gossip column written 30 years ago. But this stuff all had a strangely pressing immediacy to it, because in some way, it was also about me. I had been living with her ghostly presence 18 hours a day for months and months. The woman had been dead for, at that time, 16 years, and everyone was dying to share stories with me about whom she slept with even ten years before that. What kind of Pandora's box had I opened? It dampened my appetite for a certain kind of gossip. Especially since, in some way, I had become Jean Seberg. To this day, when someone mentions Rock Hudson, for one nanosecond I think they're talking about me. My immediate response is to raise my hand and say, "Present." And then I remember I'm not Rock Hudson. Nor am I Jean Seberg.

When I read in Elia Kazan's autobiography that Marilyn Monroe came to his house the night that Joe DiMaggio proposed to her and that she wanted to celebrate her impending marriage by sleeping with Kazan, I felt for a variety of reasons that it was a story that didn't need telling. Why couldn't Kazan take that story to the grave with him without putting it into print? Did he think telling a story like that, while DiMaggio was still alive, would enhance his reputation as a great cocksman? It does something for his reputation but I don't think that's it.

Notes on Clint

If films are, among other things, about watching and being watched, both Clint and I did our fair share of both.

What does it mean when the camera looks at a woman pityingly? OK, not pityingly—obsessively. OK, not obsessively—intensely. OK, not intensely . . . All these adverbs, and others, are often used to suggest that the camera has emotions and desires. OK, then—at such great length, occupying so much time on the screen. Woman is the mystery to be solved and dissected and broken down and understood. At least until the day when women direct and women are behind the camera, assuming, of course, that women are indeed different than men, as everyone keeps assuring us. In recent times, who has occupied more space on the screen, more screen time, than Clint Eastwood? The audience watches him and the response is not "I want to know more." It's never "I want to penetrate to the heart of the mystery that is Clint." No, that's not why we look at Clint. We never get past the surface of Clint, the most looked-at man in modern times, because there's nothing more than the surface. We watch Clint. But what is he doing? We're not watching him in repose. We're watching him watching. He's always watching something *else* that's going on. We're watching him, waiting for him to spring into action, which he invariably does. When I am watched, I am like the sleeping beauty waiting for the prince to kiss her and wake her up. I am passive as I am being watched. You can't even be sure that the wheels are turning in my head. Clint has the stillness of a cobra ready to strike. And much as we like looking at his face, which rarely changes, we never learn anything more about him than we did in the previous shot. He is an unchanging, static specta-

cle devoid of meaning. And don't even bother trying to supply any where none is asked for. What do we see when we look at Clint? When we look at me? Clint. Me. Clint—a man waiting for something to happen that he will participate in, a situation that he will actively change. Me—a woman waiting for something to happen to her, waiting for a man to take her away from all this. And don't think there weren't plenty that didn't want to.

The programmer of a major film festival, after seeing the film, asked me where I had gotten Seberg's diaries. I was baffled and took a second to respond. "From the same place Dickens got David Copperfield's diaries." The festival director looked at me blankly and said, "What do you mean?"

A French entrepreneur and man-about-film who had worked on *Breathless* took me aside after seeing my film and chastised me for the way I had portrayed her. He was also a good friend of Romain Gary's and had seen them both together many times in the years since *Breathless*. He told me that Seberg was really "a milk-and-cookies type of girl." Not if you read Carlos Fuentes' account of his affair with her in *Diana: The Goddess Who Hunts Alone,* she wasn't. They had an affair when she was in Mexico making *Macho Callahan*, which is, apropos of nothing, the story of a woman who falls in love with the man who murdered her husband and rapes her. Seberg, and you can hear her voice very clearly in the book, as if she is actually speaking what is written on the page, comes off as a taunting, mocking lover who demands that her new lover measure up to Clint Eastwood. It was in Mexico that she became pregnant, by a student revolutionary, *not* Fuentes, who was the father of the child that died shortly after birth. It was that same child that the FBI deliberately insinuated was fathered by a Black Panther.

Nor do you get the feeling that she was a milk-and-cookies type of girl if you read *White Dog*, by Gary, in which Gary virtually says that Seberg ran guns for the Panthers and hid weapons in their house. An American producer who made a film in England that Seberg desperately wanted to be in but ultimately wasn't, told me that when she met a man she looked in his eyes and immediately knew if they were or weren't going to fuck (his words, not mine). Well, people give off what they want to give off. And people see in others what they want to see. But whether or not you believe that people at bottom are really unknowable, no matter how intimate you are with them or how many experiences you've shared together, I think that on almost any level one would have to say that Seberg was an extraordinarily complex person and could, perhaps more than most of us, assume a variety of different guises depending on the situation. Robert Rossen, who directed her in *Lilith*, said she was like an all-American cheerleader who cracked up. And this was long before she cracked up. Several people who knew her quite well told me that I had captured her very accurately and truthfully. Even though that pleased me, I don't know what it means. Accurately? Truthfully? I never knew the woman. I only knew her as a fan knows an icon. But I think I learned a great deal about her, from a very particular perspective of course, as a viewer, from watching and re-seeing her movies, because every actor projects something of their own essence onto the screen. I suppose it depends on what the viewer sees or imagines he sees there. If it's milk and cookies, so be it. I don't buy it for a second.

My most recent Jean Seberg-related incident: I was invited to a party for the premiere of a public television arts magazine show. The friend who brought me introduced me to one of the producers who, when she was introduced to me, looked at me for a moment. "You made *From the Journals of Jean Seberg*," she said. "Didn't you?" She told me that after she saw the film she went and got her hair cut in the Seberg style. This time it saddened me. It's one thing to have your hair chopped off after seeing *Breathless*. It's quite another to emulate a dead movie star whose life was, well, an extravagant mess, and whose last years were considerably less than edifying. A few weeks later I was called by the executive producer of the show and invited to do an episode about Cindy Sherman, because the woman who had gotten the Seberg haircut showed him a tape of my film. Sherman wouldn't consent to being interviewed, and they felt that I would be the ideal person to do a piece on someone who refused to appear on camera. I guess I was being typecast, and I sort of resented it. But what the hell. I took the job. Even filmmakers have to pay the rent.

Mark Rappaport is a filmmaker. He is currently preparing two feature-length fiction films, *Roy Cohn—Or, How I Learned to Hate the Commies* and *Pasolini's Next Film* (both bios, sort of), and writing *"My Life in Art" by Howard Hughes*, a script about the making of *The Conqueror*.

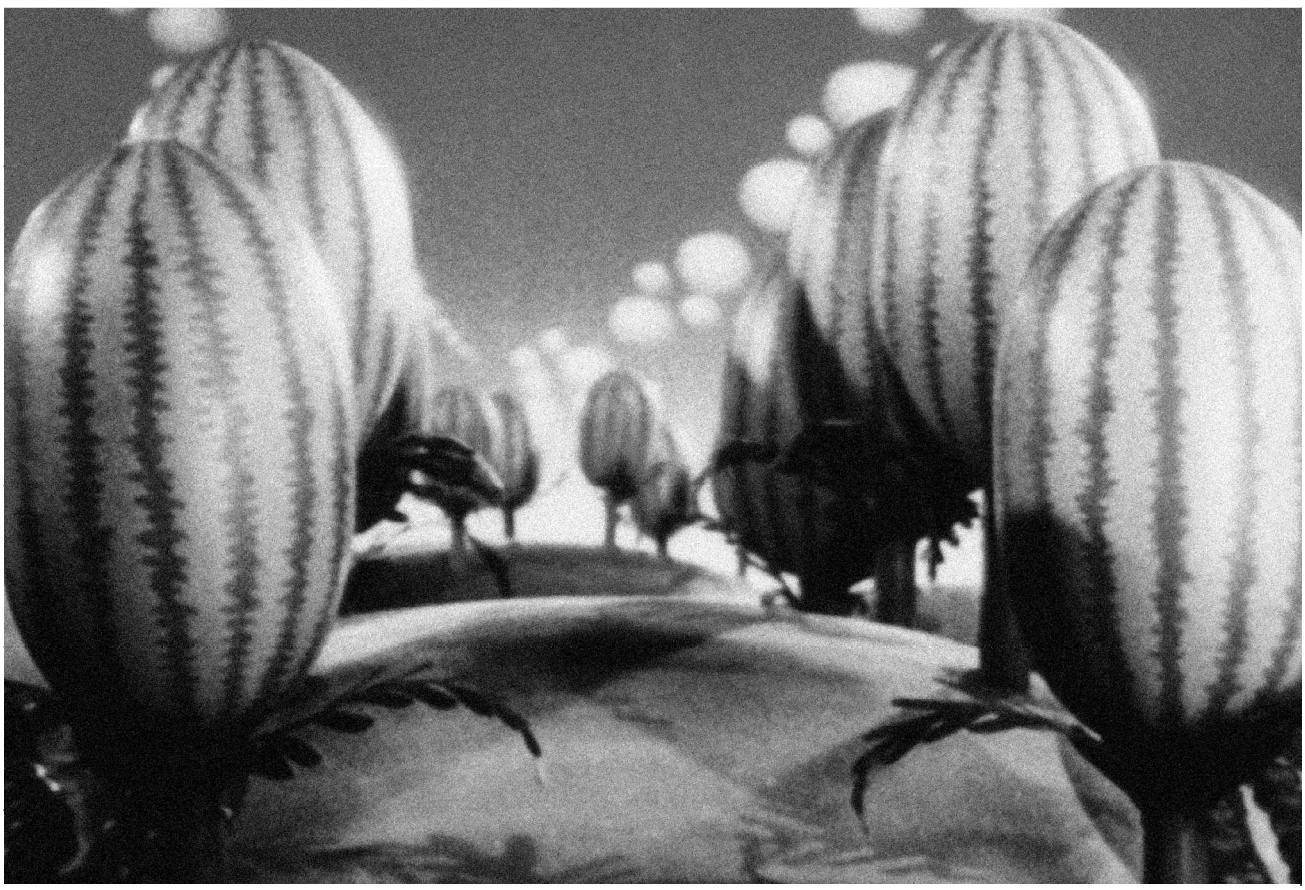
Richard Neupert

Trouble in Watermelon Land

George Pal and the Little Jasper Cartoons

In contrast to the Disney studio, which employs hundreds of artists to ink and color sequences, the Pal Puppetoonery is an old garage, converted into a Santa Claus workshop. In it skilled wood-workers with lathes and carving tools turn by the hundreds the wooden figures which another dozen artists paint in gay colors, and a handful of intensely absorbed photographers slowly and tediously shoot in Technicolor.[1]

—Collier's, 1943



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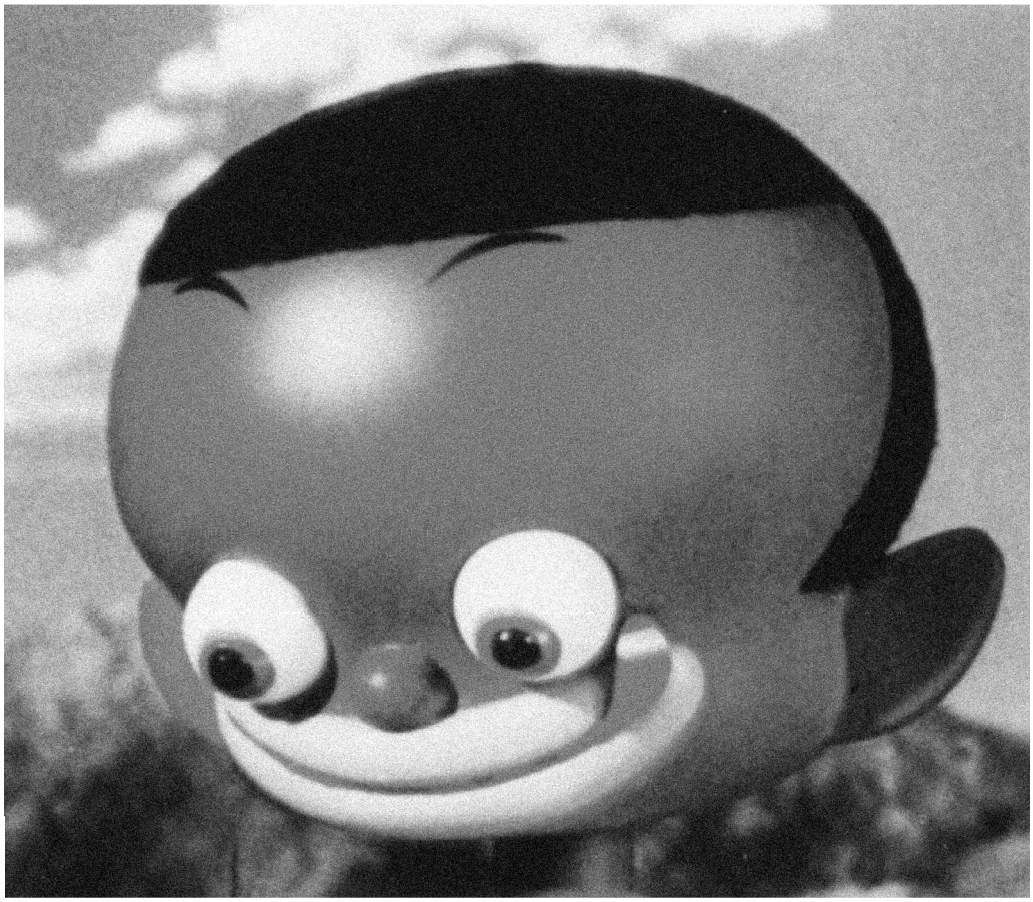
Watermelon Land (opposite); Jasper as extreme caricature (right)



Thorny difficulties arise when ethnic imagery intrudes on otherwise good or important films. . . . Ethnic cartoons of the 1930s and 1940s remain a problem for animators, critics, and audiences.[2]

—Charles Solomon, 1994

In the 1930s and 40s, George Pal's animation of wooden figures with replaceable parts provided a revolutionary alternative to cel animation. Breaking from the norms of dominant American studio animation, Pal's Puppetoons, distributed by Paramount, involved three-dimensional sets and wooden figures filmed with expressive lighting and flamboyant camera movements. The aesthetic differences between Pal's $25,000 Puppetoons and the cel animation of Disney, Fleischer, or Warner Bros. are as instructive as they are striking. These stop-motion films featured hard-edged, brilliantly colored fantasy worlds that were realistically concrete and yet quite expressionistic; their overall visual layout today looks much closer to that of Pixar than to the classical cartoons of the 1940s. Moreover, Pal's subject matter also differed from that of conventional Hollywood studio animation. He often filmed unusual folk tales with exotic sets and fantasy sequences, with some, like *Tulips Shall Grow* (1942), haunted by references to Nazi Germany's brutal assault in Europe. But his most famous and controversial tales are contained in the 17 short films in the Jasper series. Unfortunately, however, Pal's unusual contributions to the history of animation have been consistently overlooked or minimized by film critics and historians, partly because of what is seen as the offensive content of the Jasper cartoons.[3] It is precisely the strangeness of his mode of production coupled with the objectionable content of the Jasper series that has unfortunately allowed cinema studies to isolate and even ignore these strange and amazing animated films.

George Pal (1908–1980) arrived in Hollywood after having successfully animated Puppetoons in Europe, where he established a niche company with his stop-motion puppetry. Born in Hungary, Pal moved to Germany and, in 1931, became head of UFA's cartoon division in Berlin. One year later, he opened his own commercial film house, where he established his distinctive style by shooting motion-picture advertising films (for a commercial series he animated real cigarettes, equipped with bendable arms and legs and tiny attached facial features, to sing and dance). However, when the Nazis began to investigate the animator because of his Hungarian background, Pal and his wife Zsoka moved, first to Prague, where he developed a portable stop-motion camera, and then to Paris, where he worked briefly, trying to find a studio connection. Finally, in 1934, Pal landed an advertising contract with Philips Radio and moved to Holland. Pal created a number of commercials for Philips, pixillating objects and animating puppets. He also began to experiment with and exploit the new, bright colors made possible with Gasparcolor's saturated color process. Gasparcolor was known for its intense color qualities, but was less flexible for live-action filming than Technicolor. Despite its long exposure times, this color-rich process became particularly popular with animators, including Oskar Fischinger and Len Lye, during the 1930s. One of Pal's most successful color commercial films was *Radio Bulb Revolution* (1935), which the Norwegian historian Gunnar Strom cites as exerting a strong influence on other European animators.[4]

Pal quickly used the funds from the Philips ad campaign to form his own studio in order to make what he called The Puppetoons, eventually employing as many as 75 artists and craftspeople, and working with glass as well as wood to build his solid sets and characters.[5] By adopting an English-language logo, Pal could reach out to Great Britain, securing animation contracts beyond any single national market. As an article in *Collier's* pointed out, "Pal became to European movie-goers the merchant of fantasy that Walt Disney was to America."[6] Many of the Philips films were equivalent to short music clips of an illustrated song; titles like *Ship of Ether* or *Philips Cavalcade* (both 1934) featured songs owned by Philips, which then motivated the visuals, which is very similar to the way music worked in cartoons for Disney's Silly Symphonies and Warner Bros.' Merrie Melodies during this era. The Philips films then end with a pitch for the audience to buy a Philips radio and listen to "the whole world under one roof." Philips was the world's largest radio manufacturer, so their commercials provided Pal with generous budgets and great visibility.

By 1939, George Pal was well enough known for his animation style that he was hired briefly as a guest lecturer at Columbia University. In New York, Paramount's president, Barney Balaban, saw Pal's work and entered into an agreement to distribute Pal's Puppetoons, which then became known as "Madcap Models." When given this distribution offer from Paramount, Pal and his family moved once again. Balaban provided two options for Pal: he could move to Florida and work alongside Paramount's more famous and largest cartoon supplier, Fleischer Studios, in their new studio space, or head to Hollywood. Pal chose California, where he established the Puppetoons as a semi-independent company.[7] He distributed all his American cartoons under the Paramount logo, and one of the few sacrifices he had to make was to abandon Gasparcolor, since Paramount's contract with Technicolor prohibited the use of any other color process.[8]

Throughout the 1940s, Pal continued to produce industrial shorts on the side, beyond the Madcap Model series. He even built top-secret scale models for the U.S. Defense Department's preparation of the D-Day Invasion. During the war, the expense of Pal's seven-minute Puppetoons at Paramount increased from an initial $15,000 to $25,000 (by 1944), which is fairly consistent with the cost of the average Fleischer cartoon of that era, but far below the production budgets at Disney, or even the industry average of $35,000.[9] It is worth remembering that Disney spent roughly that same amount of money on Silly Symphonies like *The Three Little Pigs* way back in 1933, so Pal's costs were very competitive. Moreover, in 1944 Pal won an Oscar for "development of novel methods and techniques" in animation, and his individual Puppetoons at Paramount received six Academy Award nominations (although, interestingly, Pal's strange and elegant satire of the German "screwball army," *Tulips Shall Grow,* lost out to Disney's more cartoonish anti-Nazi film, *Der Fuehrer's Face,* in the 1942 Best Cartoon Short category).

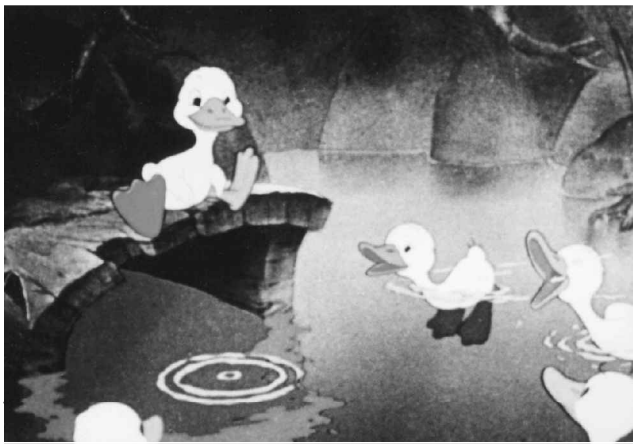
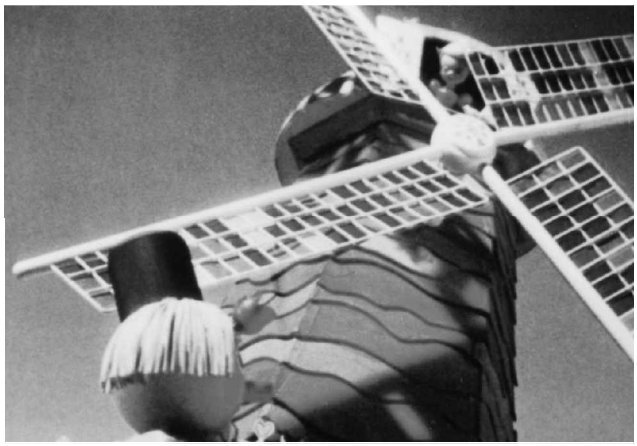
Despite the acclaim earned by Pal's work, in 1947 Paramount discontinued their contract for Puppetoons, in part due to rising costs. In later years, Pal explained that his own costs had risen too quickly and he was ready to move out of the difficult, risky field of short filmmaking. Moreover, Paramount had bigger plans for Pal; they immediately hired him to take over their special effects department. Pal's experience with precision modeling as well as with writing, producing,

and directing enhanced his value for special effects, since such trickery lay precisely between live action and animation. Over the next decade, Pal would direct and produce popular science fiction films such as *When Worlds Collide* (1951) and *War of the Worlds* (1953), as well as the Academy Award-winning *tom thumb* (1958), which combined his special effects abilities with Puppetoon traditions. Unfortunately, Pal's cartoons are often dismissed by film scholars today as quaint, rather juvenile products whose real importance was as a training ground for his real contribution: special effects for science fiction movies.

During the 1940s, George Pal's Puppetoons provided a distinct and even unique alternative style to American animation at a time when studio cel animation was the norm in Hollywood. Pal's three-dimensional staging and aesthetic choices allowed him to produce a representational space whose mise-en-scène and framing far exceed the detail, depth cues, and thematic use of color for which Disney cartoons are normally celebrated. As Kristin Thompson pointed out in a 1980 article, "Implications of the Cel Animation Technique," Hollywood cel animation had been constrained and trivialized into a set niche of conventions and norms by the 1930s, and thus cartoons have been marginalized not only by the cinematic institutions, but also by cinema studies.[10] During the 20 years since Thompson's article first appeared, there have been some significant strides in film studies to reassert animation's importance, but her arguments regarding the historical trivialization of cartoons remain valid and pertinent today, especially with the rapid expansion of computer animation, which is often reviewed a bit differently than primarily hand-drawn animation. Classical Hollywood cel animation was defined and marketed within narrow boundaries that emphasized its connection to comic-strip traditions of magic, fantasy, and childish stories. "The ultimate ideological result of the assumption that cartoons are for children was a trivialization of the medium," in contrast to documentary or experimental uses of the cinema, which had more prestige.[11]

All of Pal's major competitors employed studio-based cel animation techniques. If cel animation's potential for formal experimentation and free play was subordinated to telling childish tales plausibly, its visual style was one of the largest casualties. While Disney cartoons in the 1930s exhibited a wide range of visual strategies to suggest "real" depth and volume cues, cels nonetheless feature a relatively limited narrative space due to commercial constraints of time, money, and production techniques.[12] Cel animation tends to preserve the background with few changes, allowing most action to take place on the top one or two cels only, in order to capitalize on the essential purpose of cel animation, which was developed to allow animators to redraw only a limited number of elements from frame to frame in order to economize and maintain steady, jitter-free drawings and diegetic spaces. Classical Disney animation typically uses color shifts into the distance, thorough use of shadowing, reflections, overlapping objects, exaggerated perspectival drawings, volume cues, and occasionally the multiplane camera, to represent depth according to graphic art conventions. Disney's award-winning shorts, *The Old Mill* (1937) and *The Ugly Duckling* (1939), serve as a perfect examples of this aesthetic, since both contain deep space represented by overlapping objects and also color shifts into the distance to suggest the loss of focus caused by "real" space and receding planes of action. These two cartoons also include a number of water shots where the surface of the water is composed of a great number of colors to suggest its fluidity, but where the reflections in the water also move and lose focus as the wind causes ripples to disrupt the surfaces. [Figure 1]

By contrast, Pal's cartoons use actual depth, since all the objects are carved out of wood and staged on sets built on large tabletops in his studio. He often referred to them as "color cartoons in three dimensions." These settings, props, and characters can then be filmed from a number of camera angles and lit with conventional motion-picture lighting units in a manner parallel to live-action productions. This hybrid process moves animation closer to many 1940s classical Hollywood norms, such as conventions of three-point or expressionistic lighting, and even extreme camera angles and deep focus, à la *Citizen Kane*. For instance, early in *Tulips Shall Grow,* Jan visits his girlfriend Janette, who happens to live in a windmill. The low angle camera reveals Jan in the foreground, screen left, with Janette high above peeking out of a window looking down, upper screen right. [Figure 2] The shadow from the rotating windmill arm also passes across the brightly colored exterior wall as the characters interact, lending additional motion and depth cues. Later, after the Screwball Army has destroyed the windmill, Jan, believing Janette dead, sits crying in the burned-out cathedral. The camera is at an extreme high angle, shooting, down through the few remaining rafters, the tiny figure of Jan below, barely visible in a spot of light

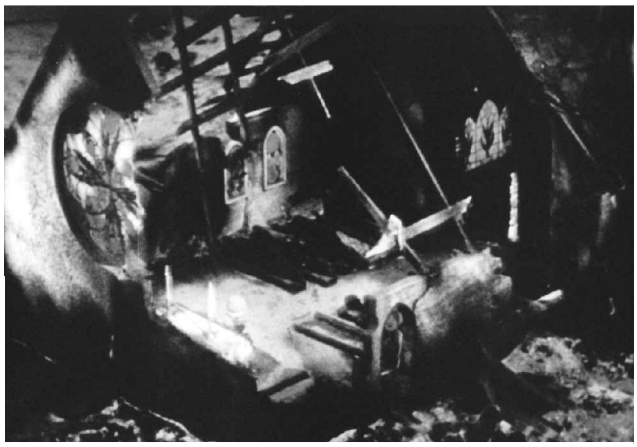
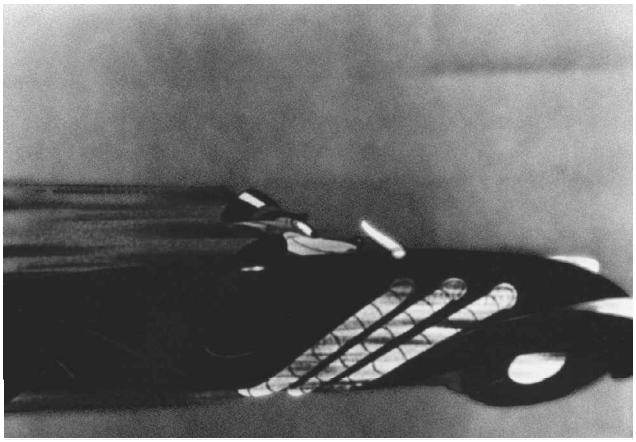


Figure 1 (top left): Water, depth, and reflections in *The Ugly Duckling*. Figure 2 (top right): Janette's windmill. Figure 3 (bottom left): Cathedral bombed. Figure 4 (bottom right): High angle on Jan in the ruins.

before the altar of the vast, devastated cathedral. [Figure 3; figure 4] Pal's story is not only excessively melodramatic in its frightening violence and gloom; the corresponding style, with expressionist gestures, lighting, and camera angles, turns the sad tale into a modernist series of three-dimensional setups.

Moreover, the temporal cues for character movement in Pal's Puppetoons are worked out in minute detail to obey strict perspectival rules and parallel live-action movement, thereby avoiding the vast arsenal of illusionistic motion cues of cel animation. Pal's films generally stage and film frame-to-frame shifts in the puppets, while most studio cel animation shoots each frame twice, saving labor and expense, so that movement on cels is often represented via 12 distinct images per second rather than Pal's 24. Moreover, cels routinely resort to distortion and speed lines to indicate rapid movement, while Pal's characters "move" through real space. For instance, the racing wolf in Tex Avery's *Red Hot Riding Hood* (1942) turns into a bullet-shaped automobile, while Jasper, fleeing from the angry, giant watermelons, never stretches abstractly out of shape; rather he is simply displaced at increasingly greater distances from frame to frame to denote his accelerating rate of speed. [Figure 5; figure 6] The motion in a Pal cartoon is therefore perceived as no different qualitatively than that of live action. Like live-action films, Pal also occasionally resorts to *trompe l'oeil* backgrounds and even back projection as part of his sets, which distinguishes his Puppetoons visually from the watercolor background art of typical cel cartoons. Pal's standard backgrounds involve perspectival set-ups or paintings. The most intensely colored backgrounds, however, are often reserved for the most fantastic moments in the films—fantasy trips to Watermelon Land, or Professor Scarecrow's subjective memories of a nightclub performance in *Jasper's Minstrels*. [Figure 7; figure 8]

While these strategies seem to point to Pal's animations as more like classical Hollywood filmmaking



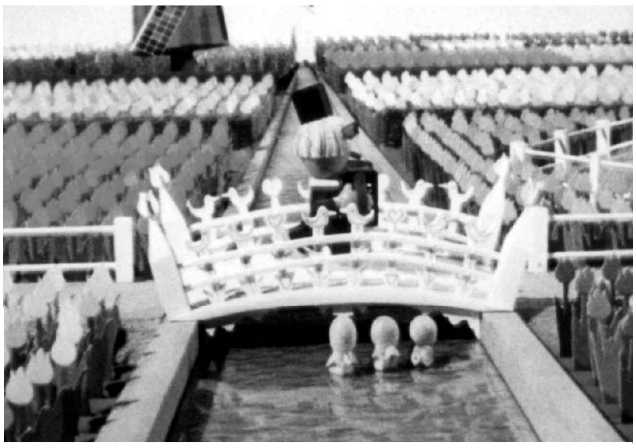


Figure 5 (top left): Avery's speeding wolf. Figure 6 (top right): Jasper slides down a watermelon.
Figure 7 (bottom left): Perspectival set for tulip field. Figure 8 (bottom right): Minstrel stage set.

than cels, they are nonetheless accomplished with puppets, which are after all just one step removed from basic toys. The Puppetoons are, therefore, even more trivialized by motion picture history than are drawn cartoons: Pal's work is generally summarized as a rare example of a now lost and tedious *craft,* while Disney, Tex Avery, and Chuck Jones cartoons are praised as modern visual *art*. For instance, Giannalberto Bendazzi writes, "Pal was not so much a great artist in command of his own poetic world, as an inimitable technician of movement and a showman."[13] Tim White points out that animators like Avery and Jones enjoyed critical revivals during the era of auteurism and modern European art cinema,[14] but George Pal has never been discussed alongside such visual artists, even though his visual style seems to anticipate so much of contemporary 3D animation, such as Pixar. The *Collier's* quote used to open this article is particularly significant, since it equates the artistry of Pal's workers to the quaint skill of Santa's elves; Pal makes toys rather than art and is thus evoked as closer to a Disney character than a Disney competitor.

Pal's narrative space is less dependent upon traditional drawn animation's history and conventions than that of cels and more a product of his unusual use of color, smooth motion cues, and novel mode of production. The color rendered by Technicolor for Pal's cartoons rivals that of any animation technique, save perhaps Len Lye's direct, camera-less experimental films. Pal's bright lighting and close camera-to-figure range allow highly saturated colors, which derive in part from the bright paints applied to the highly polished wooden surfaces of his characters. His characters have all the gloss of billiard balls. In preproduction, George Pal and his associate Jack Miller would sketch out the action in close relation to the audio track. These detailed, frame-by-frame sketches would then be filmed like a flipbook to check the action and serve as scaled patterns for the woodworkers and set builders. Sets were generally made from *papier maché,* while

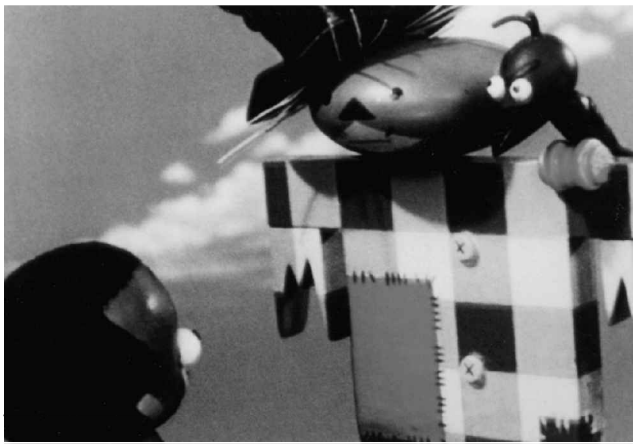


Figure 9 (top): Scarecrow's special cloth and buttons. Figure 10 (middle): Jasper sizes up a melon. Figure 11 (bottom): Jasper's head and body change shape.

figures were carved from wood with arms and legs made of wire and/or glossy latex materials that would lend solid cues for volume and texture. The finished characters were typically 10 inches tall, although other versions, as small as 1½ inches or tall as 14 inches, could be built for reinforcing perspective in various shots. Special cloth was even commissioned with fine-grain patterns woven in to suggest the puppets were in fact life size, so that Professor Scarecrow's checked suit looks appropriate for a six-foot figure, even though the shirt is only about three inches by four inches. Moreover, details in clothing or objects like jewelry or tie clasps had to be attached and worked on by the crew under magnifying glasses to protect against imperfections in frame-to-frame set-ups since all the characters, objects, and motions would be hugely magnified on the screen during projection in theaters. [Figure 9]

One of Pal's more distinctive strategies was to create the illusion of fluid figure movements by choreographing camera movement to "follow" the characters while there were also on-going changes in the shape of the characters' bodies. He made the hard wood figures seem highly flexible by changing the shapes of their heads and even torsos as they spoke and gestured. Pal would typically build 12 or more heads for each character rather than using one constant head with changing facial features. As *Popular Mechanics* reported in the 1940s, according to Pal, "Different facial expressions such as smiling, frowning . . . and the attitudes of conversation cannot be imitated in a single head."[15] Thus, while Bugs Bunny over at Warner Bros. may have only had his eyes and mouth moving during some conversations to save the necessity of redrawing the head for all shots, Pal's characters had facial and body parts moving in synchronization quite often. [Figure 10; figure 11] All body trunks had set holes for plugging in alternate heads, arms, and legs. One cycled step by Jasper, for instance, involved filming 13 frames, each with a different pair of legs. A fast blink of a character's eyes required three eye changes, a slower blink stretched out to five or seven sets of eyes and frames of film. Pal's John Henry seems to have provided a special case: he was filmed with 42 different heads and 73 sets of legs.[16] During the intricate musical numbers in *Jasper's Minstrels,* not only do the heads of the band members change shape to show the strain of blowing their horns, but the trombones themselves shift and bend with the notes as they play.

Pal innovated the practice of creating and laying out in advance an entire array of required parts for an entire cycle of movement for a given action. As Paul Wells points out, "Instead of moving a model a little at a time between each frame, the moving part could be replaced with the following part that progressed the movement of the puppet until the sequence was complete."[17] The result was that the solid puppets could be replaced in a given position for subsequent shots from

varying angles; more flexible puppets that have to be bent and molded as they go would not allow such firm and predictable placement. An average cartoon lasted seven and a half minutes, requiring between 11,000 and 12,000 frames. Each frame was also recorded with the Technicolor animation camera, which takes three separate exposures per projected frame (one for each color filter), dragging out the filming to an average of three minutes per filmed frame, which of course does not include the time to move the figures, scenery, lighting units, or camera for the next set-up. With cels, all the creative work is completed before the filming, so the actual animation stand cinematography tends to be purely mechanical; for Pal, the technique of replacing parts for each individual exposure ensured that the filming was truly part of the intricate, artistic, production process.

All this attention to detail paid off, since most reviews cited the unique color and smooth movement of Pal's cartoons. Yet contemporary reviews of the Jasper series often reveal a jarring tension between the celebration of the visual style and the acceptance of the racist elements of a series about a little black boy who gets into all sorts of trouble. One typical review in *The Hollywood Reporter* is especially revealing of the mix of respect for Pal's technique and failure to register any concern over his content. The splendid Technicolor and smooth movement is praised, as is "the amazing grace of Mammy's black hands when she comforts her mischievous pickaninny."[18] [Figure 12] This review is all too representative of mainstream and Hollywood press reactions to Pal's successful Jasper series. *Time* magazine wrote, "*Jasper and the Watermelons* is a new departure in the field of U.S. animated cartooning. . . . The method is similar to Disney's—with a carving knife substituted for a crayon."[19] A 1942 *Box Office* wrote of the series, "Very good. . . . Every segment of the audience will respond," and cited the magnificent color, three-dimensional image, and lively musical numbers.[20] Concerns over the stereotypes being created and perpetuated via the "little pickaninny Jasper Hawkins," as Paramount's advertisements labeled him, were overshadowed by praise for quality techniques and the resulting family-oriented entertainment. The Jasper series satisfied classical Hollywood norms for product differentiation and high quality, but the series eventually came to an end because of what Paramount saw as the excessive cost of production, not because of the content.

Beyond their unusual mode of production, however, it is this second aspect of Pal's Puppetoons, the thematic content and its complicated construction of ethnic representations, that is of keen interest to us today. It is one thing to marvel at the clarity of focus, high key lighting, interesting use of camera angles, and intense Technicolor of the world that Jasper inhabits. But it is then impossible not to regret that Jasper's bulbous head has gigantic rolling white orb eyeballs and huge light pink lips; he fits the cruelest sort of caricature of a minstrel show's black boy. And Jasper's mother is typically reduced to fragmented signifiers of the plantation genre's mammy, with her large, beefy arms and frame, ever-present apron, and broom used both to sweep the floor and beat no-good characters. There were, however, a few complaints from various critical circles about the racist implications of such stereotypical representations. But in interviews during the 1940s, George Pal appears to hide behind naiveté, claiming that as an immigrant, he was simply bringing to life a truly American black folk character, and harbored no racial prejudices himself. Gail Hickman's 1977 biography, *The Films of George Pal,* buys into this weak line of reasoning by claiming, "Pal, who had been raised in Europe and *knew nothing of racism,* could not understand what the problem was. To his way of thinking, little Jasper was 'the Huckleberry Finn' of American folklore."[21] Obviously, this sort of defense sounds pretty hollow since Pal, who had seen the rise of Nazism firsthand, could hardly pretend to know nothing of racism and ethnic superiority. Yet for years Pal argued that upon arriving in America he was intrigued with and inspired by black culture, so he was deeply troubled, especially as a progressive European who had fled the Nazis, when people attacked him for creating Jasper.

Not surprisingly, one of the first publications to denounce Jasper in print during the 1940s was the new national magazine *Ebony,* which attacked Pal for reinforcing key negative stereotypes of African Americans in the series: "His Puppetoons have been criticized by Negro and white newspapers, organizations, and notables as perpetuating the myth of Negro shiftlessness, fear, and childishness. . . . For him there is nothing abusive about a Negro boy who likes to eat watermelons or gets scared when he goes past a haunted house."[22] Yet even *Ebony*'s attack on the Jasper series includes information for the audience about how much time and attention went into the craft of creating the Jasper cartoons, and marvels at the number of heads and legs and movements needed: "And all parts must match each other perfectly so that the illusion of reality and movement holds."[23] It was apparently impossible for even *Ebony* to discuss the

Figure 12 (left): Mrs. Hawkins' "graceful hands." Figure 13 (right): Tanks chase Jan.

content without also acknowledging the astonishing mode of production and resulting style. In this way, the reception of the Jasper cartoons is quite similar to that of *Birth of a Nation* and *Song of the South,* which were both movies that amazed on one level while offending on another, thus causing real problems for progressive reviewers and, especially, for African Americans.

Similarly, most references to Pal's work in subsequent survey animation histories quickly qualify their accounts of his contributions by scolding Pal for his inappropriate representations of black characters. Yet film historians should acknowledge that Pal's Jasper offers a rare glimpse of a black cartoon series character with highly contradictory ideological functions. Unfortunately, this complexity has never been adequately investigated; Jasper is too quickly dismissed as an embarrassment. Today it is inadequate simply to attack or apologize for Jasper, especially since George Pal's overall range of Puppetoons was so unusual, rich, contradictory, and thus fascinatingly frustrating. For instance, while Pal was making his first *Jasper and the Haunted House,* he was simultaneously working on *Tulips Shall Grow,* which attacked Nazism, portraying its barbarous tactics for all children to see and understand, as the Screwball Army attacks—chasing Jan, flattening the tulips, smashing Janette's windmill, bombing the cathedral, and darkening the ground and sky with explosions. [Figure 13] Janette is lost in the chaos, but by the end a heavenly rain rusts the bolt-like enemy, Janette reappears, and the couple resumes the happy courtship dance which had been so brutally interrupted. The two young Dutch children who are attacked and shelled by the merciless troops, tanks, and airplanes may be a bit more sympathetic than Jasper, yet they also embody exaggerated cultural stereotypes—they have round white faces with rosy cheeks, they wear wooden shoes, and even live in a windmill surrounded by fields of tulips (which is similar to, though certainly more romantic than, Jasper's shack surrounded by watermelon fields). All Pal's Puppetoons functioned in the realm of cultural stereotype, but the world of Jasper was much more firmly rooted in the negative shorthand of racist representations, featuring rural poverty, lying and cheating black males, and the comically naive and ignorant Jasper.

In terms of the dramatic action, *Jasper and the Watermelons* (1943) is a much lighter fantasy than *Tulips Shall Grow,* but nonetheless it has a haunting sequence with a frightened child being chased by threatening figures. This cartoon begins with little Jasper being told by his "mammy" not to eat any watermelons because they give him "the colic." The Hawkins family consists of only the overweight mammy figure and Jasper, and their home is a rural shack with broken-out screens that sits perched on a cliff next to a small garden patch. As he looks longingly at the melons in the garden, Jasper is confronted by Professor Scarecrow and Blackbird. Scarecrow is the ever-present menace to the Hawkins family, distracting or misleading the wide-eyed, drawling Jasper in all the rural episodes. He tells Jasper about a place of giant watermelons where the rivers run with watermelon juice and it rains watermelon seeds. Intrigued, Jasper asks "Is they bigger than these?" As Scarecrow takes Jasper under his arm and explains how amazing Watermelon Land is, Blackbird makes wisecracks, adding comic banter and clever word exchanges with Scarecrow, who

often replies with lines like "One a' these days I'm gonna eradicate me a blackbird."

As he spins his story, Scarecrow escorts Jasper into a vibrantly colored world of green watermelon hills, and then bright red watermelon-slice mountains. However, he fails to tell Jasper he could not eat any of these amazing melons, so once Jasper does, the watermelon trees come alive, the high-key lighting shifts to low-key night, and the huge melons chase the now tiny characters, singing "Gonna be trouble in Watermelon Land today." The terrorized Jasper manages to escape, leaping out of the huge, angry mouths and riding down the rivers of flowing watermelon juice and home to the protective arms of his mammy. Oblivious to Jasper's surreal adventure, she rewards Jasper with a slice of melon for having apparently resisted the temptation to eat any of the watermelons in her own garden. Following so quickly on his terrible ordeal, the frightened Jasper cannot bring himself to eat the melon, but instead throws it through the open window at Scarecrow and Blackbird, who are now tempting a dog with stories about a land with huge ham bones. The final image is of the mother's hands lifting a white plate to reveal the Paramount logo. Thus, *Jasper and the Watermelons* reaches back to old stereotypes of an African-American community made up of rural poverty, a broken family, a heavy, stern, yet loving mammy, and idle, trouble-making black males. This diegetic world was not far removed from the earliest racist films that featured black folks in watermelon-eating contests or stealing chickens from a neighbor's farm.

Jasper's Minstrels is another tale in which Jasper listens to a story by Scarecrow and Blackbird only to regret it. This time, Jasper's mother has sent him on an errand to take a fancy coat to the deacon. On the road, however, he meets Scarecrow, who asks to try it on, since it reminds him of the coat he used to wear as the "emcee" (which stands for "mostly corn," Blackbird chimes in) of his group, Dixie Wheeler's Georgia Minstrels. Wearing the coat, Scarecrow describes a typical show, and there is a flashback to a series of musical numbers, including "Carry Me Back to Ol' Virginie" and "Dixie." During each musical number, a cluster of singers or musicians moves in unison, often with their little hats bouncing on their heads as they sing and the tambourines pulsate in their hands. Backdrops include idyllic images of an old paddle boat winding its way down a moonlit river and past rolling cotton fields as they sing about laboring so hard for "ol' master on the plantation." In the end, after the musical review is over, Scarecrow has torn the coat because of all his gesturing as he conjured up these visions of the good old days, and Jasper's mother shows up to beat him with her broom for "telling tall tales to Jasper again." Both of these plot lines are typical of the series, and in each, old stereotypes abound. In *Jasper's Minstrels,* there is a clear and strong nostalgia for the good old unreconstructed South. Such a romanticization of the past, which recurred over and over in Hollywood plantation genre films, was already being vigorously attacked by progressive forces. However, it is worth noting as well that some of Pal's Jasper themes, such as urging rural folks to stay put, respect the old traditions, and avoid stealing, also turned up in 1940s live-action race movies like Spencer Williams' famous *Blood of Jesus* (1941), made by and for African Americans.

Further complicating any summary of Pal's output or ethnic stereotyping, however, is the fact that his *John Henry and Inky Poo* (1946), the tale of the black railroad worker, was praised in the very same issue of *Ebony* where his Jasper was attacked. Pal's tale of John Henry features the voice of Rex Ingram narrating the story of John Henry beating the nail-driving machine, the Inky Poo, only to die of an exhausted heart at the finish line. *Ebony* wrote: "It is the first film that deals with Negro folklore, that has a Negro as its hero. Miracle of miracles, it is that rarest of Hollywood products that has no Negro stereotypes, but rather treats the Negro with dignity, imagination, poetry, and love."[24] Pal followed *John Henry* with *Date with Duke* (1946), a tribute to Duke Ellington that involved Ellington playing his piano and interacting, via intricate matte work, with Pal's Puppetoons, some of whom dance and play musical instruments along with Ellington. In this case, the puppets are personified perfume bottles who play along with his "Perfume Suite," while one angry gypsylike figure must be convinced that music and dancing are good; he eventually joins in, dancing on the keyboard. [Figure 14; figure 15] Here, the puppets with their white faces, elegant diction, old-world European powdered wigs, and bejeweled clothing become the naive, child-like characters, afraid to speak to the famous Ellington and stunned when he offers to play his piano along with them.

Further complicating our historical impression of Puppetoons involving black characters is the fact, acknowledged by *Ebony,* that Pal always employed black actors for the voices: "Pal does not use, as other cartoonists do, white actors that talk 'like Negroes.' He employs the finest Negro talent available."[25] Among Pal's actors were the African-American Shakespearean

Figure 14 (left): Composite of Duke Ellington and dancing Puppetoon. Figure 15 (right): Dancer and Ellington's animated fingers.

actor Roy Glenn, who provided Scarecrow's voice in the Jasper films, while black choirs like the Luvenia Nash Chorus provided the traditional songs, and a well-known array of black musicians was hired for the jazzy musical numbers. Dixie Wheeler's Georgia Minstrels, mentioned in *Jasper's Minstrels,* was even a real touring black musical group around the turn of the century that is recreated here with Pal's puppetoons. Pal in real life was quite a jazz and folk music fan, and while his images and plot devices remained too firmly rooted in racist stereotypes of the day, their blunt effects were partially undercut by the vital authenticity of the soundtracks, including dialogue, singing voices, and musical accompaniment. Unlike contemporary cartoons such as the famously insulting *All This and Rabbit Stew* (Warner Bros., 1941), in which Mel Blanc creates the voice of the rural black hick who gets outsmarted by his intended quarry, Bugs Bunny, Pal's cartoons featured authentic, contemporary black culture through its sounds.

Thus there was a real celebration of African-American voices and songs in Pal's cartoons, including the "signifyin'" and verbal comic rhyming by Scarecrow and Blackbird. Their exchanges are good test cases for the frustrating polysemy of Pal's Jasper cartoons. Sometimes they offer clever jive-talking word play; other times, sadly, they resemble the most shameful sort of Amos N' Andy routines. Nonetheless, even though Thomas Cripps argues that Pal made *John Henry* as "atonement for his guilt over his misunderstood Jasper series," and even though Pal continued the series with titles like *Shoeshine Jasper* (1946), most critics agree that he discarded some of the most offensive stereotypical elements in these later Jasper films.[26] Jasper was moved out of the rural shack and watermelon patch and into the city, where he could listen to jazz and get into more "modern" troubles—though these also involved situations like learning how to shoot craps and other stereotypical urban activities which simply replaced the racist rural icons: back alleys and honkytonks were now substituted for watermelon patches. Further complicating any sort of time line, however, is the fact that as early as his *Philips Broadcast 1938,* a sort of musical review with Puppetoons, Pal was exploiting urban stereotypes with caricatures of black folks in Harlem singing, playing instruments to "The Rhythm's OK in Harlem," played by Ambrose and his Orchestra. But here already the great, vibrant swing music and street scenes were contaminated by characters shooting craps on the sidewalk and sticking their heads up out of piles of watermelons at the local fruit stand.

How then should we historicize Pal's often embarrassing stories and begin better to understand the cultural functions of his Little Jasper series? Clearly, we need to investigate his negative representations more thoroughly, complicating rather than simply condemning their narrative functions. This reconsideration must allow for ambivalence, ambiguity, and multiple connotations as we realize that the more blatantly racist codification of Jasper's stereotypical world is routinely undercut by contradictory codes of respect for, or at least fascination with, contemporary aspects of African-American life and culture. As Henry T. Sampson writes, "Depicting black characters as derogatory stereotypes was the universal practice at all cartoon companies before 1960. Within a multicultural society, cartoons can offer a convenient opportunity for the dominant majority to legitimately

express many of their prejudices towards a less powerful minority."[27] Yet not all of Pal's films present such prejudice. Thomas Cripps points how actively the NAACP and Office of War Information struggled during World War II to reduce the number of racist images of African Americans in order to promote an image of a more successfully integrated America. Cripps explains that the NAACP movie review board was often torn over cartoons: "The jazzy cartoons boggled NAACP viewers because they were cast in a specifically urban style that flaunted a mix of jive-talk, hepcat body english, and flashy zoot suits, in sum an exaggeration of the outrageous behavior of a pioneering urban teen-oriented music culture that already was jamming the Brooklyn Paramount to hear its heroes."[28] Many of Pal's cartoons engagingly and comically make reference to these contemporary African-American cultural landmarks, but then undercut the excitement over new black culture by dragging in some of the same old stereotypes. For instance, Cripps points out that in *Hot Lips Jasper* (1944), "the soundtrack featured the ecstatic trumpet of the great Rafael Mendez laid over shots of the two black heavies dressed as bebop fans in search of a mess of spareribs and yams."[29] The music, costumes, and caricatures lean more toward modern, even authentic, hip sides of a lively new black culture. But old racist stereotypes meant for comic effect cancel out any potential vibrance.

Pal's Jasper series thus functions as a lively locus for examining the slow and painful transition from negative stereotypes over to a playful and vital tribute to 1940s black cultural patterns. Sampson points to some of the difficulty in evaluating Pal's Puppetoons: "Pal may have succeeded in bringing black folklore to the public, but he also helped perpetuate all of the negative stereotypes that he found when he came to the United States. The stereotypes include chicken stealing, shooting craps, fear of ghosts, black cannibalism, the minstrel show, and shoeshine boy."[30] *Ebony*'s initial complaint in 1947 was just as direct: "To American Negroes attempting to drown the Uncle Tom myth that Negroes are childish, eat nothing but molasses and watermelons and are afraid of their own shadow, Jasper is objectionable."[31] By the end of the war an industry voice, *Hollywood Quarterly,* also attacked Pal, "The adventures of Jasper . . . perpetuate the misconceptions of Negro characteristics. When we are building a democratic world in which all races should have a chance for full development, it is libelous to present the razor totin', ghost-haunted, chicken stealin' concept of the American Negro."[32] These complaints in the name of democracy and the movie industry's responsibilities echoed the contemporary debate and critical disappointment surrounding Disney's 1946 release of the Uncle Remus tale, *Song of the South*.[33]

Yet despite, and also because of, their strange, often uncomfortable mix of stories and styles, George Pal's Puppetoons deserve to be inserted into the animation canon alongside Fleischer's Out of the Inkwell, Disney's Silly Symphonies, and Warner's Looney Tunes. Pal's Jasper proves a rich area of study both as a minority practice—puppetry in an industry dominated by cels—and as a dramatic example of the representation of minorities by the majority—ambiguous representations of African-American culture written and directed by a white European male. From an ethnic studies perspective, *Jasper and the Watermelons* engages the audience in ways very different from *John Henry*: it is at best ambivalent in its contradictory representations of black characters and culture, while *John Henry* is a rare case of a film highlighting a unified and proud black community. But as Paul S. Cowen argues, audiences faced with ambivalent or even contradictory narratives tend to simplify them, applying subjective external criteria or privileging one reading over a more complicated interpretation and reducing any disturbing ambiguity or polysemy down to an easily condensed reaction.[34] Thus it is easy to condemn Pal's cartoons as simply racist in the case of *Jasper*, or simply positive in the case of *John Henry* or *A Date with Duke*. But I would argue that today's reaction, of condemning Pal's Little Jasper series as a monological racist product, would be just as erroneous as many mainstream white reviews from the 1940s that failed to recognize its negative stereotyping while applauding its use of color and humor. George Pal's 1940s cartoons, like so many other classical-era films dealing with race, instead offer today's film historians a challenge to our understanding of Hollywood's diverse institutional modes of production and their complex and troubling relation to the construction of ethnic stereotypes within American culture. Pal's Jasper provides film studies with an aesthetically striking test case of animation auteurism, a strong example of Hollywood's institutional racism in action, and a vivid body of texts that functioned historically in the shameful "bamboozling" of African Americans.

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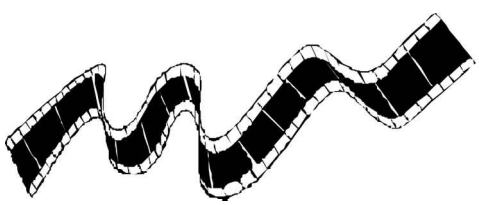
Notes

1. "Pal of the Puppets," *Collier's* (16 January, 1943), p. 15.
2. Charles Solomon, *The History of Animation* (New York: Wings Books, 1994), pp. 146-47.
3. For instance, Michael Barrier's *Hollywood Cartoons: American Animation in its Golden Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) and Maureen Furniss's *Art in Motion: Animation Aesthetics* (Sidney: John Libbey, 1999), though very helpful texts in other ways, sidestep Pal and Jasper.
4. Gunnar Strom, "Desider Gross and Gasparcolor, European Producers: Norwegian Products and Animated Commercials from the 1930s," *Animation Journal* 6, 2 (Spring 1998), p. 32.
5. Gail Morgan Hickman, *The Films of George Pal* (New York: A. S. Barnes, 1977), p. 19.
6. "Pal of the Puppets," *Collier's* (16 January, 1943), p. 61.
7. For a definition of "semi-independent productions" see Matthew Bernstein, *Walter Wanger: Hollywood Independent* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994), p. 93.
8. William Moritz, "Gasparcolor: Perfect Hues for Animation," *Animation Journal* 5, 1 (Fall 1996), p. 57.
9. Dave Fleischer claimed their average cartoon cost by the end of the 1930s was already around $25,000. See Leslie Cabarga, *The Fleischer Story* (New York: DaCapo, 1988), p. 174. For information on Disney's costs, see my "A Studio Built of Bricks," *Film Reader* 6 (1985), p. 37.
10. Kristin Thompson, "Implications of the Cel Animation Technique," in Teresa de Lauretis and Stephen Heath, eds., *The Cinematic Apparatus* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980), p. 108.
11. Ibid., pp. 110-11.
12. For more on color and narrative space in Walt Disney cartoons, see my "Color, Lines, and Nudes: Teaching Disney's Animators," *Film History* 11, 1 (1999) p. 77-84; and "Painting a Plausible World: Disney's Color Prototypes," in Eric Smoodin, ed., *Disney Discourse* (New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 106-17.
13. Giannalberto Bendazzi, *Cartoons: One Hundred Hears of Cinema Animation,* trans. Anna Taraboletti-Segre (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 107.
14. See Tim White, "From Disney to Warner Bros.: The Critical Shift," in Kevin S. Sandler, ed., *Reading the Rabbit* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1998), p. 38-48.
15. "Putting Life in Puppets," *Popular Mechanics* (September 1947), p. 244.
16. "Ingenious Models Bring John Henry Folk Saga to Movie Life," *Popular Science Monthly* 149 (December 1946), p. 113.
17. Paul Wells, *Understanding Animation* (New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 65.
18. Cited in Henry T. Sampson, *That's Enough Folks: Black Images in Animated Cartoons, 1900-1960* (London: Scarecrow Press, 1998), p. 41.
19. *Time* (19 March, 1942), pp. 82, 83.
20. *Box Office* (14 November, 1942), cited in Sampson, op. cit., p. 31.
21. Hickman, p. 27 (emphasis mine).
22. "Little Jasper Series Draws Protest from Negro Groups," *Ebony* (January 1947), p. 27.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. Thomas Cripps, *Making Movies Black* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 186.
27. Sampson, p. vii.
28. Cripps, p. 197.
29. Ibid., p. 198.
30. Sampson, p. 30.
31. *Ebony,* p. 30.
32. Quoted in Sampson, p. 30.
33. See Matthew Bernstein, "Nostalgia, Ambivalence, Irony: *Song of the South* and Race Relations in 1946 Atlanta," *Film History* 8 (1996), pp. 219-36.
34. For more on audiences and stereotyping, see Paul S. Cowen, "A Social-Cognitive Approach to Ethnicity in Films," in Lester Friedman, ed., *Unspeakable Images* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991), pp. 353-76; as well as Terry Lindvall and Ben Fraser, "Darker Shades of Animation," in Kevin S. Sandler, ed. *Reading the Rabbit* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1998), pp. 121-36.



Susan Felleman

Dirty Pictures, Mud Lust, and Abject Desire

Artemisia

Myths of Origin and the Cinematic Object

When a film undertakes the representation of art as a theme, it is more or less openly and more or less knowingly entering into a contemplation of its own nature and positing its own unwritten theory of cinema as art. Art (and by this I mean the other visual or plastic arts: painting, sculpture, photography, architecture, etc.) has been reflected and represented in, thematized by, and structured into narrative films in myriad ways throughout the history of cinema. And narrative films have in fact revealed much about themselves and their sense of their own origins through their incorporation or figuration of art, which can range from the all-encompassing theme to the still-significant marginalia or background. Examples of the former include the self-conscious artiness and reflexivity of films by, among others, Albert Lewin (*The Picture of Dorian Gray,* 1945), Peter Greenaway (*The Draughtsman's Contract,* 1982), and Derek Jarman (*Caravaggio,* 1986), which display an explicit and profound engagement with and are to a certain extent about fine

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Isabelle Adjani in *Camille Claudel*

art and art history, as well as the rather less reflexive but still intensely self-conscious identification of film and painting in Vincente Minnelli's *Lust for Life* (1956) and other films about artists. In the other category (marginalia or background), one finds the seemingly casual but in fact highly significant use of "high art" reproductions in Godard's sets (of works by Renoir and Picasso, for instance, in *Breathless* [1960] and *Pierrot le fou* [1965]); the key secondary role of artist or artwork (Robert Mitchum's character in John Brahm's *The Locket* [1946], or Kiki's plastered sculpture in Martin Scorsese's *After Hours,* [1985]); and the insinuations of such films as *Wall Street* (Oliver Stone, 1987) or *Legal Eagles* (Ivan Reitman, 1986), in which contemporary art serves as literal and figurative background to the story and in which the world of art is shown to be as corrupt and venal as the world of commerce with which it is brought into real and metaphoric relations.[1]

Mainstream films that foreground art, as well as most that background it, induce a rather curious tension, as the reflexive presence of art threatens the seductive flow of the fictional world with a spasm of viewer self-consciousness. This is why we refer to such works as reflexive: it is as though a mirror had been held up to the beholder. The work of art *en abyme* reminds the viewer that she is viewing. It is interesting, then, to consider what is at stake in such representation. For one, status: not only does the subject of "art" confer a certain stature; the reflexive use of art *en abyme* is a hallmark of modernist art, and therefore a nod (albeit an ambivalent one) to the "highbrow" viewer.[2] Second, a claim: one knows that the film has a contribution to make to the ongoing, unwritten theory of the art of cinema that the movies themselves are always telling, or to the ongoing, often unwritten debate about cinema's sometimes uncomfortable and always shifting position among the worlds of art, commerce, industry, and mass media.

And it is therefore doubly interesting to consider the representation of artist couples in film. The sexual relationship between two artists offers another permutation in cinematic self-reflection. In three fairly recent films, *Artemisia* (1997), *Camille Claudel* (1988) and *Life Lessons* (1989),[3] not only are art and artistic process thematized, but cinema—the one art, according to André Breton, with the greatest "power to make concrete the forces of love"—is shown, by extension, as the product of that love.[4] Art is shown as the progeny of sexual passion in these films—the child of the artist-parents. In each film, the nature of the artistic relationship—its romantic, psychosocial, and sexual aspects—suggests something about larger issues relating to the experience of film. It is almost as though each was telling its own personal myth of the origins of the film art, recreating a primal scene, or telling its family romance: the child's fantasy of its parentage, its origins.

This "originary" story is expressed with various emphases in the three films, but is always articulated through a predictably racial and specifically gendered view of the erotics of artistic collaboration. Although artists' identities in terms of race, gender, and sexual orientation are in fact various, these three films rely on the construct of a prototypical artistic relationship between white, heterosexual men and women. Further,

in each film a young woman artist is apprenticed to an older male, a relationship of power and gender that is at the same time entirely realistic and profoundly mythic. Two of the films, *Artemisia* and *Camille Claudel,* are based on the stories of "real" historical female artists: the Italian Baroque painter Artemisia Gentileschi, and the fin-de-siècle French sculptor Camille Claudel. The third film, *Life Lessons,* represents a fictional relationship between contemporary artists in New York, but is based on Dostoevsky's *The Gambler* and the real diaries of Apollinaria (Polina) Suslova, who was Dostoevsky's mistress when she was a young aspiring writer in her twenties and he was in his forties and already establishing a reputation.[5] Thus, the three films to be analyzed as articulations of a myth of origins are in fact grounded in history, a situation that both reinforces their originary quest and entangles them with issues of historicity and fact.

Dirty Pictures

Artemisia, directed by Agnès Merlet, should not be discussed without reference to the controversy that resulted from this film's travesty of historical justice, although it should be recognized that the historical record, like the film itself, is a construct open to analysis. The historical (as opposed to Merlet's fictional) Artemisia Gentileschi was the gifted daughter of a prominent Roman painter, known not so much for the powerful talent displayed in her work—and her singular, almost unprecedented achievement as a woman painter—but, sadly, as a notorious figure at the center of an infamous trial. In 1611, when his daughter was still a teenager, Orazio Gentileschi, who had been instructing her himself, hired Agostino Tassi, with whom he was then working on several important commissions, to teach Artemisia perspective. Tassi, a fine painter, was also a violent rogue who had been previously implicated in murder and incest and had been imprisoned on several occasions. He raped young Artemisia, then tried to bribe his way out of the offense with empty promises of marriage. Orazio, who learned of the crime only later, finally took Tassi to court, suing him for the rape of his daughter, as well as for the theft of several pictures. During the five-month trial, Artemisia, cross-examined under torture, persisted in her testimony that Tassi had raped her and had then tried to appease her with promises of marriage. She is said to have shouted at him as the strings of the *sibille* (an instrument of torture similar to the thumbscrew, in which metal rings around the fingers are tightened by strings) were pulled tighter, "This is the ring you give me, and these are your promises."[6]

As Mary Garrard, the foremost scholar of Artemisia Gentileschi's art and career, put it in her scathing review of Merlet's film,

> There can be no doubt that the basic facts of the story are inverted in the film. In Merlet's narrative, Artemisia begs to study under and then falls in love with . . . Tassi, is deflowered by him—an act accomplished with tender solicitude on his part and minimal resistance on hers—and is initiated by the older painter into the mysteries of love and art. When her father . . . brings suit against Tassi for rape, Artemisia testifies repeatedly, even when tortured by *sibille,* that Tassi did not rape her but gave her pleasure, and she loves him. Pained to see Artemisia suffer torment, Tassi magnanimously accepts the charge of rape and his own conviction, thus ending the trial as something of a hero.[7]

A film ought not be judged by its literary or historical fidelity, but in evaluating one that touts its historical basis and its feminist heroine—and was directed by a self-professed feminist, to boot[8]—one must object strenuously to such distortions. The film's misrepresentation of Gentileschi's art is also appalling. It shows the juvenile Artemisia painting a self-portrait that actually dates from the artist's maturity, some 20 years later, and reduces it to half its actual size (and, since the picture hardly resembles the young actress who is supposed to have painted it, it even impugns, although perhaps unwittingly, Gentileschi's talent as a portraitist). The film implicitly attributes Artemisia Gentileschi's *Portrait of a Gonfaloniere* to her father, portraying her as his assistant on it; and it misrepresents Gentileschi's most famous painting, *Judith Slaying Holofernes,* as Garrard so bitingly observes, by incorporating this chilling image of tyrannicide, and of real and symbolic female power, into an erotic tableau.[9]

These egregious insults to art, history, and feminism, however, are less interesting than the view of art and sex *Artemisia* bodies forth in its scenario of artistic passion and artistic apprenticeship, its translation of these themes into images of erotic passion and involvement, and the manner in which it finally posits these as a matrix or model for cinematic origins. The film boldly sexualizes art. It constantly collapses artistic sensuality and human sexuality through scenes

in which models become sexual objects, artistic compositions become sexual dramas, and visceral responses to artistic images slip into images of pornographic titillation.

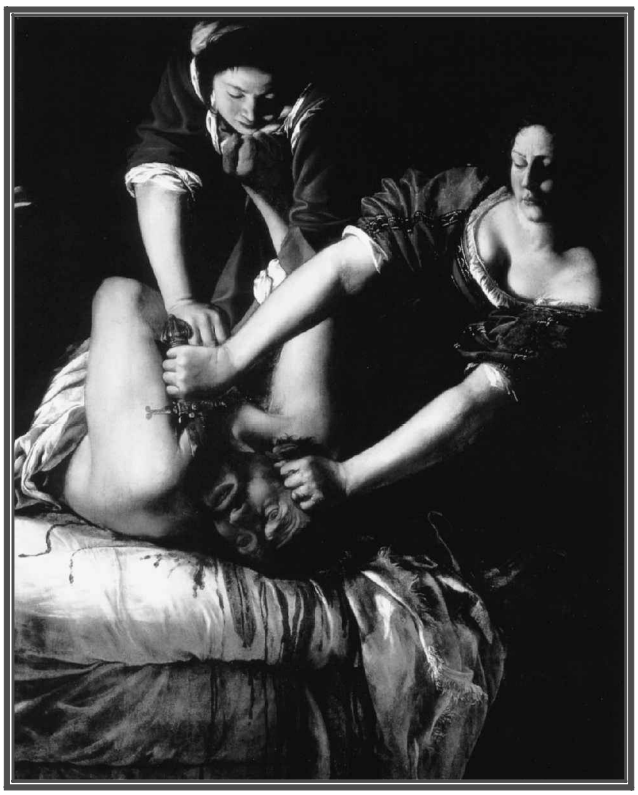
One of *Artemisia*'s key images of artistic vision is a paradox. In the scene showing Artemisia's second lesson, Agostino Tassi takes his new pupil outside in order to have her see the world through a perspectival grid, an apparatus that assists the artist in translating objects seen receding into depth onto the two-dimensional plane of the picture. But Artemisia has barely glanced at their putative subject, a seascape—one, significantly, that is not shown—before the lesson takes an interesting turn. He instructs her to close her eyes. Tassi teaches Artemisia to "see" through verbal seduction. He employs poetic, sensuous descriptive language to evoke a radiant image of a seascape in her mind's eye. All the while, of course, the perspective apparatus is there before her, but she neither looks nor sees through it. Rather, we view her through it. We come to occupy what is in effect a position reciprocal to hers—in the place of the object of her study. It is not the vast inhuman vista of the sea that is situated on the other side of the perspectival divide; it is I, it is you, the viewers.

This matrix sutures the viewer to the "master's" point of view, since Tassi soon moves from a position just behind Artemisia around the grid to occupy a position comparable to ours, looking at her—as she stands in rapture, eyes shut—thus turning her forcefully from the seer, subject of the gaze, to the seen, its object. We join the seducer in effacing the spectacle of nature—or, rather, taking its place—and taking Artemisia herself as spectacle, objectifying her, as women

Artemisia: Learning to see (or to be seen?)

are so often, so typically, objectified by the gaze of the painter, or the camera. In the Renaissance and Baroque (as later, of course) there lurked behind the supposedly disinterested and objective art and science of perspective the inexorable power relations between portrayer and portrayed. This is brilliantly illustrated in Albrecht Dürer's woodcut of a draughtsman using the perspective device to apprehend a recumbent nude from his "A Course in the Art of Measurement with Compass and Ruler" (1525–1527), which might be titled "where objectivity becomes objectification," so clearly does it explicate the sexualized dynamics of the perspectival gaze. Thus, in Merlet's *Artemisia,* wherein it comes to virtually fill the frame, the grid of the perspective screen becomes an analogue to the camera frame and the cinematic screen themselves, securing our identi-

"Where objectivity becomes objectification . . ." Albrecht Dürer's *A Course in the Art of Measurement with Compass and Ruler* (c. 1525)



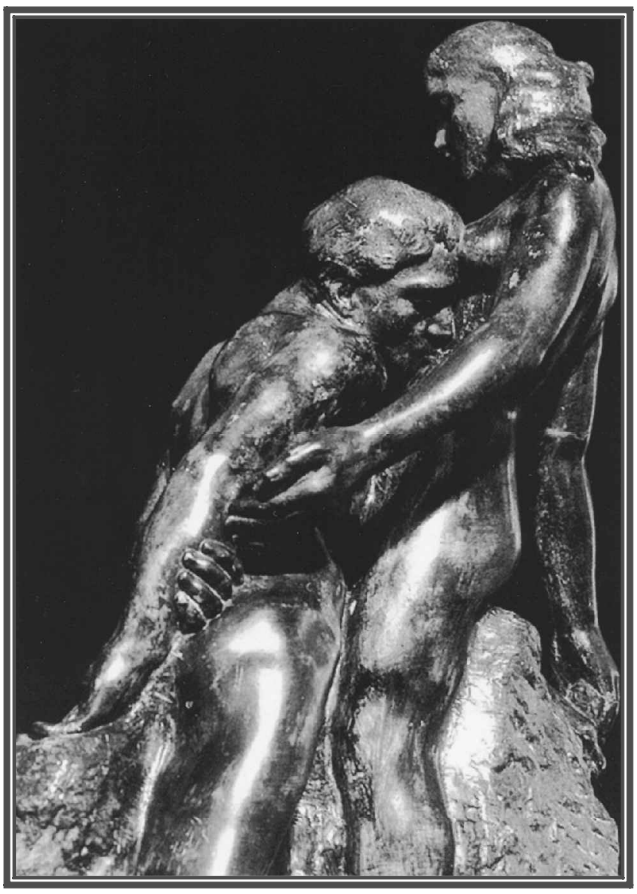
(right) Gentileschi's *Judith Slaying Holofernes* (1615–1620) and (above) *Artemisia*: master and mistress

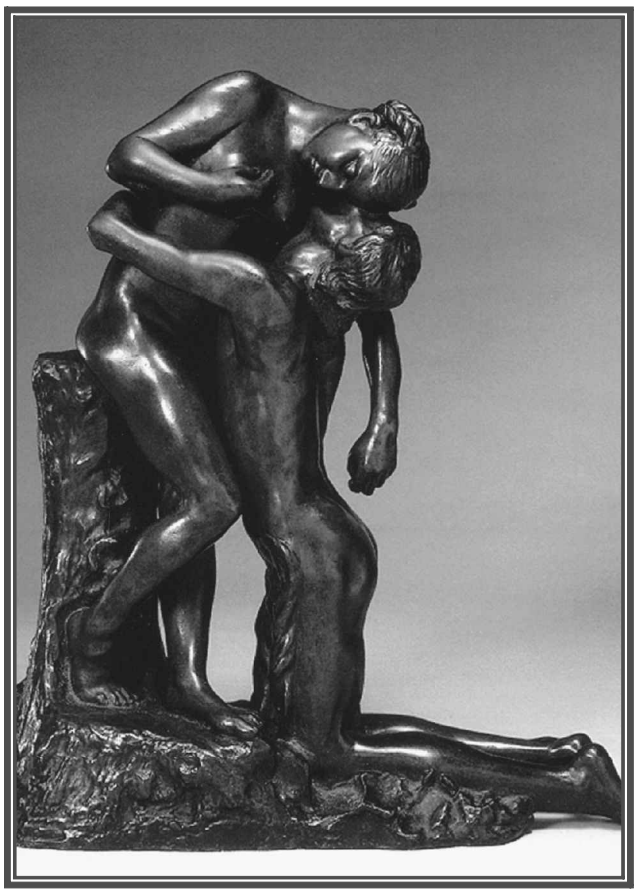
fication with Tassi, the male figure of authority, the master, the director (so to speak) who directs Artemisia's performance. In this scene, the objective landscape and the subjective feminine disappear together and are replaced by fantasy: the fantastic, shimmering, rather cinematic (because temporal) image conjured by Tassi's poetic utterances and the fantastic image of the objectified feminine, accessible and receptive, eyes shut and lips glistening in passive exultation.

Another scene confirms this translation of Artemisia from viewing subject into viewed object and consummates the act that was suggested by the evident excitement, bordering on sexual arousal, associated with this first introduction of the perspective mechanism. In this scene, Gentileschi employs the perspectival grid device to draw her teacher Tassi in the position familiar to us from the figure of the Old Testament villain, Holofernes, from her later painting, *Judith Slaying Holofernes* (1615–1620). This highly unlikely scene of a Baroque master posing, undressed, for his student, a female one moreover, is rationalized in the film by two prior scenes. In one, Tassi, plainly attracted to his young student, consents to pose for her. In the other, just prior to this, the master forces himself sexually on his seemingly willing but nonetheless much pained disciple. After the rape, Artemisia is shown at home in a reverie; in a voiceover she relates her sense of a "confused mixture of forms and dreams."

Indeed, this subsequent scene is exactly a confused mixture of forms and dreams. In it there is a complete dissolution of boundaries between subject and object, beholder and beheld, historical practice and contemporary fantasy. Again, the perspective screen is mounted, only to be traversed. Artemisia, aroused by the spectacle she beholds, puts down her instrument and inserts herself (bodily) into the composition of her scene, not as the vengeful assassin of the tyrant that we know from the Bible and from Gentileschi's magnificent canvas, but as a lover, literally lowering herself onto the supine figure of her master. The scene, unwittingly perhaps, literalizes the ironic distance between the linguistically parallel terms master and mistress. There is, of course, intriguing feminist potential in showing a woman artist taking a master as model, a conceit that is fraught with subversive possibility. But here this conceit not only inverts the meaning of Gentileschi's great picture, turning it from an eloquent image of female power and a probable reaction against Tassi and the male tyranny he embodied into a premonition of desire, but it also turns her, again, from subject of the gaze, and possessor of the pencil, into sexual object and seductress.

The film conceives Artemisia as passionate looker, or voyeur: she shamelessly provokes a youthful male companion to undress for her; peeks into Tassi's windows one night and gleefully watches the orgy she



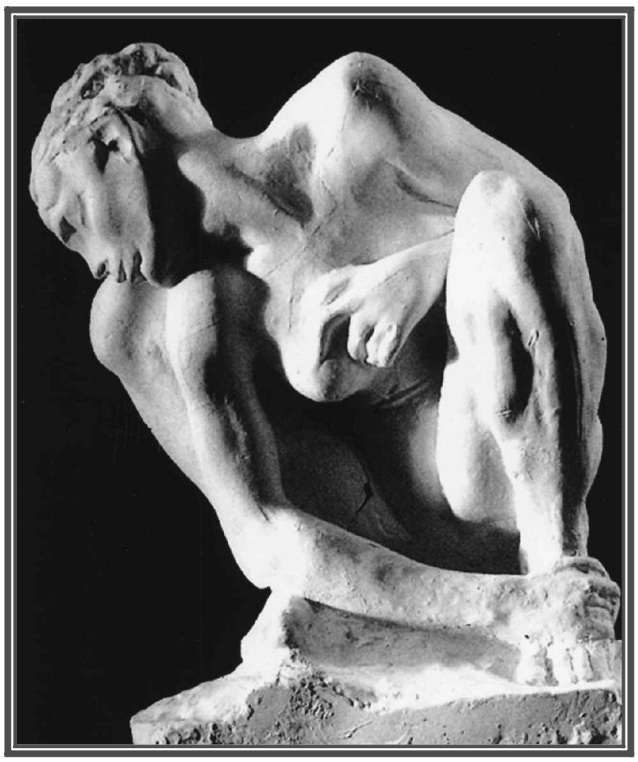


(left) "Interpenetrating heteroerotic themes . . ." Auguste Rodin's *The Eternal Idol* (1889) and (right) Camille Claudel's *Abandon* (1885–1905)

espies; and generally is shown as hungry for visual pleasure. The almost demented, eroticized gaze attributed to Artemisia in this film seems to suggest a psychosexual pathology: scopophilia, sexual pleasure in looking. Interestingly, *Artemisia* attributes this usually male "perversion" to its female protagonist, even as her agency is eclipsed by the film's tendency to translate her from subject to object. The film wants to have it both ways: to imbue its heroine with (an entirely anachronistic) sexual license and visual subjectivity and at the same time to offer her up as an object of desire. Indeed, the film begins with a sequence that perfectly embodies this double project. Its credits appear over a series of striking closeups of eyes, across the retinas of which are seen the brilliant flares of reflected candlelight. Then it dwells on the ardent visage of a young, cloistered Artemisia in a state of fervent devotion before religious paintings in a Roman church. These are images of a lust for looking that reveal something of the film's—and perhaps the cinema's in general—view of what might be called the erotics of cinema: the basic scopophilia ("I like to watch")[10] that may constitute a primary part of every moviegoer's and every moviemaker's passion.

Mud Lust

Camille Claudel, another biopic about a woman artist, also uses its story of lust and art to posit a theory of cinematic origins. The film portrays Claudel, her passion for sculpture, her relationship with Auguste Rodin, its demise, and her ultimate descent into madness. In it, scopophilia, a visual pathology, is compounded by a related, more tactile one that has in fact been called a "madness of mud."[11] The relationship between Claudel and Rodin is seen as fueled by what you might call mud lust. Their mutual calling is a "filthy" one, as they reveal in a scene early in their acquaintance (prior to their sexual relationship), when Rodin is taking Claudel home late one night by carriage. Rodin asks Camille if she is "afraid of being scolded." "No," she replies, and then, "I'm no longer a child. And my mother doesn't speak to me. . . . She doesn't like sculpture—all that filth." Rodin, smiling knowingly, re-



Camille Claudel (above) and the imagined origins of (right) Rodin's *Crouching Woman* (1880–1882)

sponds, " Mine always said, 'Get rid of them! They're everywhere! Even under the bed! . . . Your mess . . .'"

Camille Claudel, the first directorial work of cinematographer-turned-director Bruno Nuytten, is a more honest film than *Artemisia* both in its historical fidelity and in its respect for the artistic oeuvre(s) of its subjects. Art is again shown as the product of a sexual passion. But this is more appropriate to Rodin and Claudel's story than it was to Gentileschi's, since the two French sculptors both, in the period of their greatest mutual achievement, took images of sexual love as their very frequent subject and employed one another consensually as sexual and artistic partners.[12] Their works from the decade in which the two were romantically and professionally involved not only share formal and stylistic affinities (to the extent of having sometimes caused attribution problems), but also deeply interpenetrating heteroerotic themes.[13]

But even as it plays up Rodin's and Claudel's affinities, Nuytten's film is at pains to create an image of Claudel as young, beautiful, impetuous, and obsessive to the point of indecency, much as Merlet portrayed Artemisia. The atmospheric and mysterious opening scene shows Claudel's furtive nighttime venture into the streets of Paris in search of clay and her return to her cold atelier and awaiting male model, Gigante, in a manner that at first suggests dirty, clandestine, criminal, or morally questionable activity. Rodin, like Tassi, is portrayed as older, wiser, more worldly than Claudel, inspired and stimulated by the joy and rejuvenation such youthful company affords. In the scene where Rodin first takes his apprentice Claudel to his private studio, he encourages her to palpably engage with his nude (female) model, whose awkward crouching pose he manipulates. Claudel then takes over, adjusting the pose in a way that finally corresponds to an actual Rodin study from the period, the caryatid-like *Crouching Woman* of 1880–1882. This date in fact suggests that the film's "attribution" of this figure to Claudel is unlikely, since it is thought she first met Rodin in 1883. In the film, Claudel discovers the pose that works (although one wonders how well it worked from the model's point of view), adjusting Rodin's model, achieving the successful posture and an almost carnal mutual excitement, an excitement suggested by a precipitous cut from the image of the sculptors eagerly examining the three-dimensional effects of the pose at the spinning platform to that of the head of a rushing horse, always an image of erotic force.

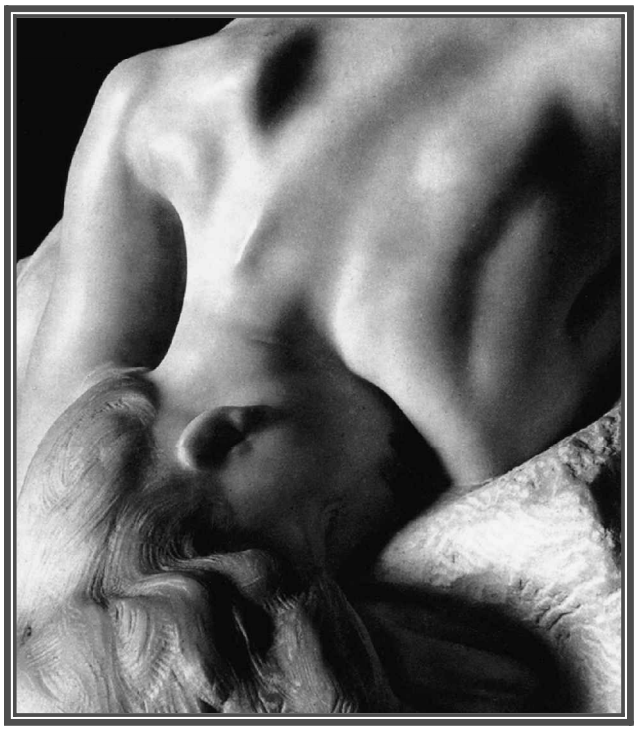
It is rather bold of *Camille Claudel* to portray this and other well-known works by the master as at least in part the result of Claudel's eye (if not hand). Where *Artemisia* effectively deattributed works long known to belong to Gentileschi's oeuvre, *Camille Claudel* does the opposite: inspiration for poses of a number of Rodin's major works are implicitly attributed in the film to Claudel. But, ironically, such seemingly feminist and historically generous cinematic gestures can

have problematic double meanings; here they often turn Claudel herself into an erotic object.

This is the case with another scene in which Claudel visits Rodin's private atelier. Set on the afternoon of Victor Hugo's funeral, it moves the relationship to a more sexual plane. The model is dismissed by a dispirited Rodin, and Claudel herself adopts the pose that achieves the melancholy eroticism of Rodin's beautiful *Danaïd* (1885), exposing her shoulders and the nape of her neck to Rodin, who approaches and kisses her there. The historical record confirms that Claudel was the model for this piece—probably when the relationship was well underway, however—although not that she conceived it. But the moment perfectly illustrates both the strangely symbiotic process through which a work of erotic power can come into being and the ease with which the female figure slips from a position of subject to that of object. It is that slippage, as well as enduring cultural assumptions about masculine priority, that contribute to the atmosphere of madness and persecution that beset Claudel later in the film and indeed in her life.

In two rather parallel scenes in which Rodin's and Claudel's portrait busts of each other come into being, gender and passion become entangled in a web of prejudice. While Rodin molds her head in a blind, sensual fervor (his eyes are shut), passionately alternating between palpating her living head and the soft, giving clay, Claudel—in a later scene—has reproduced his head from memory in Rodin's absence, a feat that the film treats with awe and not a little horror, expressed in reactions that relate it to her gender. "She did it in your absence?!" asks one of a group of (male) visitors to whom Rodin is displaying Claudel's bust of him. "Mlle. Claudel has become a master," Rodin admiringly exclaims. "She has the talent of a man," replies a visitor. "She's a witch!" pronounces another. The notion that such virtuosity is unnatural in a woman is reinforced by the strangeness of the appellation "master" when Rodin bestows it upon Claudel, his "mistress" (here again "master" and "mistress" are as close sexually as the two words are remote semantically), as well as by the charge of witchery that betrays a less admiring position. Such attitudes combined with real madness (clinical paranoia, probably) must have contributed much to the nightmare into which (the historical) Claudel descended after her relationship with Rodin came to an end in 1893. After years of struggling in an atmosphere of squalor, isolation, and increasing delusions of persecution, she was committed by her brother, the poet Paul Claudel, in 1913, and spent the last 30 years of her life institutionalized.[14]

But prior to revealing itself as something we now call psychosis, Claudel's madness was called a mad-



(above) *Camille Claudel*: discovering the melancholy eroticism of (right) Rodin's *Danaïd* (1885)

Camille Claudel: mud lust

ness of mud, and the film portrays it as a sculptural perversion, if you will: a passion for touching, feeling, and making that is tactile and dirty, virtually scatological, and highly eroticized. This "dirtiness" was alluded to in the dialogue between Rodin and Claudel in the carriage. It is illustrated beautifully by a scene of Claudel at work—a scene situated chronologically in the narrative at the very juncture between life with Rodin and descent into madness—in which, stripped down to her underclothes, she is shown passionately engaged with a huge mound of clay, pulling and tearing at it, embracing it and smearing herself with it, breathing heavily, indeed panting, and ending up covered in brown streaks of clay. This is a very ambivalent scene. There is no mistaking the explicit eroticism of it (if you listen without watching, it sounds exactly like a sex scene). But, at the same time, its place in the trajectory of the story and its inherently disturbing imagery place *Camille Claudel*'s viewers at an intersection where the allure of a dangerously passionate woman threatens to give way to the horror of madness.

Thus, from a clinical point of view, the psychosexual pathology revealed in *Camille Claudel* is not *Artemisia*'s scopophilia—love of looking. Instead, it is the more disturbing coprophilia—love of excrement, which suggests a fixation at the infantile "smearing" stage. Indeed, this film's sense of its subject necessarily holds at a distance this very tangible, visceral, sensory engagement with the material. Even as it approximates the sculptor's spatial and textural sensibility through imaginative use of cinematic technique—camera movement and sound especially (both of which are intensely descriptive and atmospheric in this film)—*Camille Claudel* finally will not go so far as to equate its own voyeurism and love of craft, even fetishism of technique, with its subject's mud lust and madness. As a possible component of the cinematic psyche, coprophilia is certainly too threatening an explanation for the filmmaker's interest in "making." The shame associated with the repression of excremental pleasures infects this portrait of Claudel with ambivalence and angst.

This ambivalence contributes to the film's oscillation between mythic images of a productive "madness of mud" and more realistic yet sensitive images of a destructive, paranoid madness. This realistic, seemingly almost justified madness, reflects an inequity that has been bitterly repeated throughout art history—to the extent that it retains any memory at all of women artists. Their stories, especially those of women who worked in the shadow of a great male mentor or peer, are all too often tragic: ending in madness, like Claudel's; suicide, as with Constance Mayer—apprentice, mistress, and model to Pierre-Paul Prud'hon—who slit her own throat with his razor in 1821; overdose, as with Elizabeth Siddall—wife and model of Dante Gabriel Rossetti—who died of a laudanum overdose in 1862; violent death, as with Ana Mendieta—wife of Carl Andre—who died in 1985 after a "fall" from the window of their Soho loft; grief, as with today's woman-artist-victim of choice, Frida Kahlo—wife of Diego Rivera—who died, after unspeakable sufferings, of pneumonia and pulmonary embolism in 1954; or, for those lucky enough to retain

their sanity and outlive their shadowing counterparts, mere obscurity, as with Lee Krasner (1908–1984), actually slightly older than and in most respects, excluding fame, the equal of her husband, Jackson Pollock.[15]

Abject Desire

The figure of the hard-drinking Jackson Pollock and the large, fierce, muscular action paintings for which he became famous—along with latter-day followers such as the egotistical, macho, neo-expressionist painters of huge ambitious canvases who were dominant in the 1980s (e.g., Julien Schnabel, Francesco Clemente, and Anselm Kiefer)—are prototypes for the character and work of Lionel Dobie in Martin Scorsese's short but stunning film, *Life Lessons* (his contribution to the *New York Stories* anthology). Pollock is tacitly (and punningly) acknowledged as Dobie's original in the film's credit sequence, where the New York School's most famous painter's characteristic "splatter" is the background to the film's opening titles. *Life Lessons'* story, like *Artemisia*'s and *Camille Claudel*'s, concerns a relationship between an older male master and a younger female pupil, but here the student neither rises to nor surpasses the master's genius. She is an insecure and indifferent painter.

It is not Paulette's vision or talent that inspire Dobie, but—perhaps more realistically—her youth and beauty, and his desire for her. She is to him that improbably mythic and old-fashioned object—the muse. Though eloquent about the experience of being such a mythic creature (late in the film, Paulette cries out, "Sometimes I feel like a human sacrifice!"), *Life Lessons*' main focus is not on the muse but on the master, and the means by which he creates. And this film is the most explicit of the three in its visual focus on artistic facture, featuring sustained and repeated scenes of art-making, equating art-making with filmmaking, offering a cinematic equivalent for virtually every painterly flourish (bold, up-front use of handheld camera; panning and tilting; iris shots; slow motion; jump cuts; filtered shots, to name a few), and suggesting a parallel between the progress (or "action") of the big painting that Dobie creates in the course of the film and the film narrative itself.

At the film's outset, the sexual relationship has already ended: Paulette, who has evidently been Lionel Dobie's live-in apprentice-cum-mistress for some time, informs him that it's over and she's moving out, possibly away from New York, which has not been nice to her (she's just been thrown over by an up-and-coming performance artist for whom she harbors a debilitating passion). Lionel persuades Paulette to stay in New York, in his loft, as his assistant, assuring her that he respects her decision to end their relationship. But he harbors a passion for her that makes hers look like a schoolgirl crush. And while Paulette's desire disables her artistically, Lionel's fuels his work. He is catapulted from a state of artistic inertia by lust. The more abject he becomes, the more energetically he paints.

Much of the film illustrates this, as Lionel alternates between pathetic, humiliating encounters with Paulette and ever more vigorous work on his big canvas, as in the scene where he cannot, for the second

Life Lessons: abject desire

time in one evening, resist entering her room, and uses an excuse both feeble and obvious in its sexual symbolism: "I think I left my sable brush in here," he insists when she chides him for entering unbidden. The scene is framed by scenes of Dobie at work, which are noteworthy in several respects. First, in a couple of big, sweeping pans, the power and the glory of Dobie's art and reputation is established (the accompanying song is about power: it's Cream's "Politician"), along with the vast scale and ambition of his work and his thick, *creamy,* painterly virtuosity. Big, passionate, athletic gestures, in the expressionist vernacular, suggest deep psychosexual forces at work.

That Dobie's is essentially a sexual energy (and a highly gendered sexual energy at that) is implied by the image of the painter glancing at, then stepping upon a black-and-white photo of a female nude in a magazine—shown in striking jump-cut closeups—followed by a quick cut to viscous yellow paint squirting out of a tube. Then it is confirmed by his almost demented behavior, his silly lost-sable-brush gambit, and his fetishistic focus on Paulette's foot. "I just wanted to kiss your foot. I'm sorry. It's nothing personal," Dobie quite improbably insists. "Do you want me to get you anything?" The scene then succinctly evokes, in the little "blue" movie this question conjures in Paulette's mind's eye and the dialogue that follows, her ambivalent sense of erotic power over Lionel. First she remembers (or imagines) him as a tender, confident, clean romantic partner (in a monochromatic sequence shot in shades of blue to Procol Harum's "A Whiter Shade of Pale"). Or does she? The song has already been associated strongly with him. As Ronald Librach puts it, relating the scene to the opening sequence of Godard's *Une Femme mariée*:

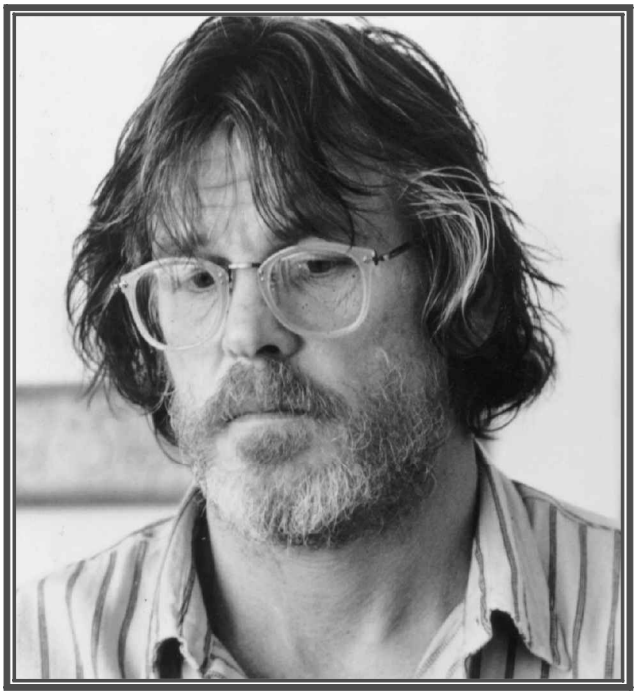
> Here, too, stylization signals an ironic supremacy of images over reality: that is, of the pathos of fulfilled desire as the theme of an interpretive pantomime all about the consummation of a relationship between an artist/lover and the object of his aesthetics and desire (palette/Paulette). The comic irony of the sequence is ensured by a simple deflection in continuity: the expressly described look of desire on her face establishes his point of view.[16]

Paulette sends the soiled, emotionally exposed, abject Lionel on his way: "Do you love me?" she asks. "Love you? I said I did. Yes," replies Dobie. "What would you do if I left?" she probes. "What would I do? . . . I'd go up on the roof and howl like a gut-shot dog." "Well, I don't love you," Paulette rejoins. "So what?" says Dobie. He leaves her room and resumes painting with renewed vigor. This time, in a rather intriguing and symmetrical conceit (shot/reverse shot), the process is shown from the painting's point of view (when the screen looks back at him, though—cf. *Artemisia*—he is no mere object; he is very much a subject, retaining the brush/phallus and his agency).

Abject, Dobie is in fact powerful, converting his misery into the action that produces the huge, virile, violent paintings so valued by society. That his passion for Paulette—for whom he'll do almost anything, he claims (kiss a New York City cop on the lips; even stretch her canvases)—not only cannot take precedence over his work but actually fuels it, is evident in a scene where Dobie fails even to notice her. Paulette has come down from her room (visible from the floor of Lionel's loft as a hole in the wall upon which he repeatedly fixates) to ask him to turn down the music, but he neither hears nor sees her as she stands, at first bemused and then plainly bedazzled by his display of creative force.

Here, too, one sees the explicit erotic force of Dobie's painting, both in terms of his thrusting and lunging libidinous energy and sensual engagement with the work and in terms of Paulette's reaction, which betrays evidence, in successively tighter closeups, of not only admiration but seduction, past and present. The cutting between the impression his work registers on her face, the process, and the work itself, the matching of cinematic gesture with painterly flourish, the choreography of the entire piece to Bob Dylan's live version (with The Grateful Dead) of "Like a Rolling Stone"—all result in a thrilling vision of creative force, a tour de force (really a perfect term to describe the cumulative effect of Scorsese's film, Nick Nolte's performance as Dobie, and the production of the painting).

Another scene demonstrates conclusively the irony of Dobie's degradation and the function of his desperate lust. He returns from an event at which he witnessed Paulette leaving with a younger, very handsome painter and discovers that she's brought the guy home: he sees movement and hears voices from his vantage point below her little hole in the wall. In this scene, Scorsese's use of music is again notable: the handsome Latin rival is named Toro; the song is Procol Harum's "Conquistador." Dobie looks—disheartened and long—up at Paulette's window, then strips off his shirt and paints like a house on fire. He goes over to the radio to tune the dial and, as the sound segues from "Conquistador" to "Nessun Dorma," a dissolve cuts to him



Life Lessons: "the sordid side of the gift of sublimation"

seated, glazed, sweaty, and exhausted, with paint in his beard. Never, perhaps, has the abject been more poignantly realized on film than here, where Dobie sits, seemingly in ruins—lumpish, inert, and filthy—as Puccini's aria (from *Turandot*) throbs. As this "lament for both unrelieved fatigue and unfulfilled love" reinforces, Dobie is the very picture of pathos and defeat.[17] But no, after a shower and a cup of coffee he is ready for a confrontation with the "bull." Toro comes down and asks him for a cup of coffee; Dobie pours him one, and in a revealing, supercilious, racist quip, asks him if he's a graffiti artist. Then a sudden burst of music shocks, as Dobie adopts his pose before the big canvas and performs the coup de grâce. The phallic thrust of the paintbrush signifies. The grin on his face says it all. Toro may have slept with Paulette but he, Dobie, is the better painter (he knows it). Toro's sexual conquest is nothing to his artistic one; he, not Toro, is the conquistador. Dobie's sense of superiority derives from his success but also, as the details of the film's script and setting implicitly suggest, from the very privileges that attend to his sex, age, and race.

The film ends with Paulette leaving as Dobie is completing his grand picture—a canvas as big as a movie screen, filled with action. "You think I just use people," he charges. "Well, you don't know anything about me. You don't know how involved I get, or how far down I go. Hell, I was married four times since before you were even born, so don't you tell me." She leaves. He is stricken. At the gallery opening where the product of Dobie's passion is displayed with other recent work, the lovely young bartender (an aspiring painter), practically throws herself at Dobie's feet and his next "human sacrifice" is in place—more grist for the mill.

The story of Lionel Dobie and Paulette, finally, is a remake of an ancient story (or is it a myth?)—the story of the genius and his muse. Scorsese sees Dobie's accomplishment as the gift of genius and the grace of sublimation, what Freud described as "the process through which the excessive excitations from individual sexual sources are discharged and utilized in other spheres, so that no small enhancement of mental capacity results from a predisposition which is dangerous as such."[18] Although Dobie's excessive sexual sources are hardly described in *Life Lessons* as unconscious, they are plainly "utilized in other spheres," much along Freud's model. Indeed, in describing the basic nature of the urges that can be sublimated into higher, cultural aims, Freud employs a term peculiarly evocative of the fine arts: "We therefore have to conclude that the sexual impulse-excitations are exceptionally 'plastic,' if I may use the word."[19] And Freud identifies art as the most privileged product of sublimation, describing the artist, in a now immortal passage which delimits the reader's picture of an artist's race, sexual orientation, and gender as much as does the term master, as "urged on by instinctual needs which are too clamorous; he longs to attain to honour, power, riches, fame, and the love of women."[20] With consummate irony and self-consciousness and not a little immodesty, Scorsese exposes in *Life Lessons* the sordid side of this gift of sublimation, its psychic cost to both "genius" and, especially, "muse," as the artistic process consumes the "relationship."

Myths of Origin and the Cinematic Object

And Scorsese knows of what he speaks. He is, after all, portraying himself (in this case, quite self-consciously, I think) in Lionel Dobie: the mature, celebrated, oft-married artist, renowned for his big, colorful, violent, action-packed, gestural, almost baroque tours de force. Likewise Bruno Nuytten, the cameraman turned director, is at some level portraying himself in *Camille Claudel,* his film about artists whose

work is shown as craft as well as art: tactile, manual, and, in the case of Rodin's big projects like *The Gates of Hell* or *The Burghers of Calais,* also big productions, created by large teams of specialists. And so, naturally, is Agnès Merlet involved in self-portraiture in her image of Artemisia Gentileschi, shown as a woman so turned on by looking at art that she must make it and make it hot. In Merlet's mind's eye, the Baroque studio becomes the modern film studio, the painting the cinematic tableau. It's a simple substitution of one kind of machinery for another.

Despite their titular female protagonists, *Artemisia* and *Camille Claudel* ultimately propose a view of artistic or cinematic origins hardly empowering to women, since each constructs art as a product of a female imagination deformed by pathology (scopophilia, coprophilia). *Life Lessons,* no gem of feminist filmmaking either, only reiterates the more common view of female artistic imagination as feeble, insecure, and distracted by more immanent concerns. But in all three films, the passionate commitment to art is seen not only as inherently and originally sexual in its underlying energies but also as explicitly bound up in sexual forces. In them, the heterosexual artist couple embodies the cinema's love affair with love, erotic and sublime. The art that seems to issue from this love, product of the erotic engagement, becomes the film itself. The narrative is a mythic one of cinematic origins—the couples personifying the ultimately erotic act of filmmaking—that touches upon the peculiar sensibility of the film and its maker(s), be those involved with the quasi-pornographic experience of looking, the almost fetishistic interest in technique and handling, or heroic passions and the valorization of gesture and production. It's a narrative that articulates the erotic nature of energies that flow into the production of any art. But by reiterating an ancient and mythic scenario of genius and muse, of master and subject, by focusing—as is usual—on the normative, white, heterosexual couple of older man and younger woman, and by entangling its female protagonists' artistic passions with images of pathological desire, the narrative finally offers an exclusive myth that aims only to explain—indeed to naturalize—the achievement of those already "known" to be great or potentially great. You might call it the primal scene of canon formation.

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This article originated as a talk delivered to the Department of Cinema and Photography at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale on April 30, 1999. I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to my colleagues there for the occasion to present it, and especially to Lilly Boruszkowski, for encouraging me to take up this topic. I am also indebted to David Anthony, Monica Bandholz, Rachel Carlson, Peter Chametzky, Kevin Koron, Tom Mogle, Linda Nochlin, Faustina Robinson, and Rebecca Sittler for their valuable assistance, input, or feedback.

Notes

1. This topic has received increasing attention in recent years. See, among other contributions, "Le Portrait peint au cinéma/The Painted Portrait in Film," a special number of *Iris* 14-15 (Fall 1992); Brigitte Peucker, *Incorporating Images: Film and the Rival Arts* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995); Angela Dalle Vacche, *Cinema and Painting: How Art Is Used in Film* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1996); the exhibition catalogue, *Art and Film Since 1945: Hall of Mirrors* (Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, 1996); and Susan Felleman, *Botticelli in Hollywood: The Films of Albert Lewin* (New York: Twayne, 1997). The striking symbolic imbrication of violence, femininity, and art in *Legal Eagles*, *After Hours*, and other films of the 80s, is the subject of my current research.
2. I have discussed the question of brow height elsewhere, in the context of a discussion of the reception of Albert Lewin's oeuvre, "How High Was His Brow? Albert Lewin, His Critics and the Problem of Pretension," *Film History* 7, no. 4 (Winter 1995): 386-400.
3. *Artemisia* (1997), directed by Agnès Merlet; written by Agnès Merlet, Patrick Amos, and Christine Miller; cinematography by Benoît Delhomme; cast: Valentina Cervi (*Artemisia Gentileschi*), Miki Manojlovic (*Agostino Tassi*). *Camille Claudel* (1988), directed by Bruno Nuytten; written by Marilyn Goldin and Bruno Nuytten; based on the book by Reine-Marie Paris; cinematography by Pierre Lhomme; cast: Isabelle Adjani (*Camille Claudel*), Gérard Depardieu (*Auguste Rodin*). *Life Lessons* (from *New York Stories,* 1989), directed by Martin Scorsese; written by Richard Price; cinematography by Néstor Almendros; cast: Nick Nolte (*Lionel Dobie*), Rosanna Arquette (*Paulette*).
4. André Breton, "As in a Wood," in *The Shadow and Its Shadow,* ed. Paul Hammond (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1991), 82. This piece originally appeared as "Comme dans un bois," in *L'Age du cinéma,* no. 4-5 (August-November 1951).
5. Martin Scorsese. *Scorsese on Scorsese,* ed. David Thompson and Ian Christie (London: Faber and Faber, 1989), 147-50; and Ronald Librach, "A Nice Little Irony: *Life Lessons*," *Literature/Film Quarterly* 24 (1996): 128-44.
6. My sources on Gentileschi and her ordeal are: Mary D. Garrard, "Artemisia's Trial by Cinema," *Art in America* 86, no. 10 (October 1998): 65-69, in which the author draws on the researches published in her larger study, *Artemisia Gentileschi: The Image of the Female Hero in Italian Baroque Art* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989); Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin, *Women Artists, 1550-1950* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles

County Museum of Art/New York: Knopf, 1984), 118-24; and Rudolf and Margot Wittkower, *Born Under Saturn: The Character and Conduct of Artists* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1969), 162-64.

7. Garrard, "Artemisia's Trial by Cinema," 65.
8. "The true story of the first female painter in art history," according to advertisements for *Artemisia*. See Garrard, "Artemisia's Trial by Cinema," 65. As for Merlet's avowed feminism, Garrard cites a newspaper article by Kristine McKenna, "'Artemisia': Artistic License with an Artist," *Los Angeles Times,* May 27, 1998, F1, F10.
9. Garrard, "Artemisia's Trial by Cinema," 67.
10. This line and the psychosexual ambiguities that relate to looking were employed with pointed insight and scathing humor by Hal Ashby's 1979 film, *Being There,* in which Peter Sellers played a naïf who meant by "I like to watch" that he liked to watch television, and Shirley MacLaine played a sophisticate who understood him to mean something rather kinkier.
11. Leonard Maltin's *1999 Movie & Video Guide* (New York: Penguin/Signet, 1998), 199, for instance, describes *Camille Claudel* as an "overblown biography of the French sculptress (Adjani), who has a 'madness of mud' and who single-mindedly pursues her art."
12. An excellent short discussion of Rodin and Claudel's relationship and impact on each other's careers—one that supports assumptions of my argument—is Anne Higgonet's "Myths of Creation: Camille Claudel and Auguste Rodin," in *Significant Others: Creativity and Intimate Partnership,* ed. Whitney Chadwick and Isabelle de Courtivron (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993), 15-29.
13. Assessing the full stylistic and thematic scope of Claudel's work from the period is very difficult, as she later destroyed most of it. See Reine-Marie Paris, *Camille: The Life of Camille Claudel,* trans. Liliane Emery Tuck (New York: Arcade, 1988).
14. For more biographical and historical background on Claudel, see Higgonet, "Myths of Creation," or the biographical monograph by the artist's niece, Reine-Marie Paris (above).
15. The most significant book on the subject of artist couples is Chadwick and de Courtivron, eds. *Significant Others*. "Artistic Coupling" was the subject of a session organized by Susan Felleman and Peter Chametzky at the 82nd annual College Art Association (CAA) meeting held in New York, February 17-19, 1994. The session included an introduction by Felleman and papers by Beth Harris, "'Either Sex Alone Is Half Itself': Elizabeth Siddall and Dante Gabriel Rossetti"; Renée Riese Hubert, "Surrealist Artist Couples"; and Robert Hobbs, "Lee and Jackson: Symbiosis and Critique," and as discussants, contemporary artist-couple Nancy Spero and Leon Golub. Abstracts and audio tapes available through CAA.
16. Librach, 138.
17. Ibid., 136.
18. Sigmund Freud, *Dictionary of Psychoanalysis,* ed. Nandor Fodor and Frank Gaynor (New York: Philosophical Library, 1948), 178.
19. Freud, *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis,* trans. Joan Riviere (Garden City, N.Y.: Garden City Books, 1952), 302.
20. Freud, *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis,* 327.

The House of Mirth

Director/writer: Terence Davies, from the novel by Edith Wharton. Producer: Olivia Stewart. Cinematographer: Remi Adefarasin. Sony Pictures Classics.

Catharsis, said Aristotle, is the goal of drama. You'd never know it from *The House of Mirth*, an adaptation of Edith Wharton's 1905 novel by the great British filmmaker Terence Davies. Its intensity is distilled in its uncompromising restraint, and though there are passing moments of anger in the film, and rare, sudden swellings of grief, there's not a second of real release in this grim anatomy of a socialite's inexorable decline. Yet the film's relentlessness does not feel cruel. It feels like the piercing expression of a boundless pity.

Lily Bart is a strong-minded heiress whose will to independence can only be perceived as pride by the society she lives in—New York City at the turn of the twentieth century. She recklessly accumulates gambling debts, treats the powerful men who covet her with lighthearted scorn, and falls victim, in the end, to petty rumors. Disinherited, she joins the working classes, and gradually descends into drug addiction. It's the stuff of pulp melodrama, raised in Wharton's delicately histrionic treatment of the material to the level of tragedy-of-manners. In turn, Davies resists the histrionics and makes the story into a chamber-play, in which squelched emotion and strangled expression perform a hushed duet. Davies seems to have set himself the near-impossible task of making a movie about repression whose power lies in the fact that what's repressed never rises to the surface.

The Masterpiece-Theatre-style costume dramas the film superficially resembles tend to work in something like the opposite way. They're all about repression, too, typically with the self-congratulatory implication that we moderns have risen above the stifling but picturesque social rituals of days of yore. But they can usually only represent repression by revealing the strong emotions it mitigates—as in the explosions of violence in *Howards End*, say, or the sex scenes in *Wings of the Dove*. Only then do you realize what undercurrents are supposed to be surging beneath the surface. But Davies wants to reveal these undercurrents without ever manifesting them directly because, his film suggests, social repression doesn't just short-circuit true expression temporarily before it finally comes out—it kills the feelings it smothers.

There *is* a sex scene in *The House of Mirth*, and it's a marvel in its suggestion of subdued carnality, of a desire that can barely take shape amid the opulent trappings designed to crush it. The scene evokes a compelling sense of suspended time, and hopeless longing that gains force *because* it's hopeless. The pace is slowed, in long, languorous takes, and sound effects are invested with a charge of rare sensuality:

Anatomy of a decline: Gus Trenor (Dan Aykroyd, left) and Sim Rosedale (Anthony LaPaglia) hover over Lily Bart (Gillian Anderson).

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Trapped in the House of Mirth

the whispering folds of elaborate clothing, the lapping of moist lips in halting speech, the keening echo of a concerto so faint, so far distant, that it might be heard in memory alone. The scene is not meant to suggest that if only these people could break out and get in touch with their real, primal selves—à la the Merchant/Ivory *Room with a View*—then they'd triumph over the restriction of social mores. The whole point is that's just what they *can't* do.

Still, some viewers might understandably, at first, mistake *The House of Mirth* for another entry in the Merchant/Ivory stakes. It's a period piece, after all, with fancy costumes, classical music filling the soundtrack, and painterly compositions—the last image fades into a melancholy tableau that suggests Mary Cassatt. I don't mean to slight Merchant/Ivory unnecessarily here: with films like *Shakespeare Wallah* and *Roseland*, we should recall, they were international pioneers of independent filmmaking. Before they settled into the cozy niche of their recent films, they even brought some of that independent spirit to their earliest forays into costume drama—as in the dryly severe *The Europeans* (1979), out of James, to which *The House of Mirth* bears some affinities. But the rigorous spareness of Davies's film has none of the genteel aura or the classy status of the later Merchant/Ivory productions. In *The House of Mirth*, scene follows scene with an impacted cadence made harsher, somehow, by the swift, precise dissolves that link the images, and the tableaux have an enclosed, airless quality—you can sense the dank, rarefied atmosphere, but you can't breathe in it.

The whole film is slightly, delicately stylized, and Gillian Anderson's performance as Lily Bart suits this milieu perfectly. By no means is it standard, naturalistic "star" acting. It is both mannered and understated, a thoroughly modulated performance, the gestures refined, the intonations of line readings just slightly, though fastidiously, stilted. This stylization is meant to suggest a range of emotional colorings, while retaining an essential elegance. Even after Lily has resigned herself to her debasement, she remains excruciatingly well-bred—as if she *thought* she were in a Merchant/Ivory film. Considering the extreme bias toward naturalistic acting of many film viewers, Anderson's performance will not be to every taste, especially since it's at odds with the more traditional styles of many of her fellow actors—Eric Stoltz, for instance, who plays Lawrence Selden (Lily's true love). But this works for the film, too, in the end, suggesting Lily's terrible distinction, her intractable apartness.

If you're a lover of Wharton who wants to view a full adaptation of her work, see Martin Scorsese's *The Age of Innocence*. That film encompasses the waspish wit, the detailed examination of social minutiae, and

the exuberance giving way to melancholy that are the hallmarks of Wharton's great novels. With sheer intensity of focus, Davies concentrates here only on the dourness, in all its varied textures. The emotional register of the film is closer to Strindberg than to Wharton. It's a very modern rendering of Wharton's fairly modern novel, on the order of Jane Campion's treatment of James in *The Portrait of a Lady*. Davies skews some of the causes in Wharton's plot: the nature and origins of the rumors swirling about Lily are obscured, and Lily's sojourns as secretary and milliner are startling because relatively unexplained in the film's plot. This is because Davies wants to show this society as a complex closed system, where the causes of effects are never easy to determine, even when they seem to be nothing but petty personal motives.

Davies is known—when he's known at all—for densely free-associative memory-films like *Distant Voices/Still Lives* (1987) and *The Long Day Closes* (1993). These films transport the materials of British social realism, chronicles of working-class family life, into a heady context of modernist aestheticism, with fragmented narratives and highly wrought alienation-effects. But though the films look avant-garde to many viewers, it's hard to stay too alienated from them—the feeling for the characters is so deep. Watching these movies is like seeing the ghosts of loved ones, substantial but fleeting, and understanding at last the suffering that made them what they were. For Davies, we're all products of our time, and one of the things this means is that we're *trapped* in time. In those earlier films, we watch as the characters, helpless and trapped and beloved, strive variously for transcendence—pursuing the errant cycles by which they live, or joining together in fugitive song. In *The House of Mirth*, one still feels one is watching a cast made up of phantoms, and the feeling expressed for them is still deep. But because the world of the film is so tragically loveless, this feeling can take shape, not as love, but only as an abiding sympathy with those who must live, and die, there. And this time there is no transcendence—except, perhaps, for the one that might come later, after the film is done, when you know you have witnessed a work of art.

An earlier version of this review appeared in *The Independent Weekly* (Durham, N.C.).

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Annual *Film Quarterly* Film Book Survey

PART II

American Films of the 70s

Conflicting Visions

By Peter Lev. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2000. $19.95.

Peter Lev's *American Films of the 70s: Conflicting Visions* is a well-written companion to some of the cherished films from an important decade in American film. Lev eschews the auteur approach central to this decade in film history and opts instead for an "interpretative" cultural studies approach. While this methodology produces a fresh view of American film history, it does so to somewhat mixed ends.

Borrowing William Goldman's famous phrase, Lev argues that the Hollywood Renaissance happened in the early 70s because "nobody knew anything." Neither classical Hollywood nor contemporary Hollywood, the 70s caught Hollywood in between rigid modes and styles of filmmaking. By the early 70s, institutional breakdowns in the studio system had met with 60s countercultural ruptures to suggest the need for a new American film style. Big-budget studio productions like *Hello, Dolly!* (1969) crashed and burned at the box office; low-budget independent films like *Easy Rider* (1969) proved profitable. Nobody knew anything because Hollywood no longer knew how to gauge audience tastes. "In desperation," Lev concludes, "major companies bypassed established talent to take a chance on younger producers, directors, and actors."

While Lev's theoretical basis supports film history's usual explanation of the ruptures represented by 70s Hollywood cinema, he breaks tradition with his definition of cultural authorship. From the start, he challenges the "great films by great directors" approach so often applied to 70s film history. As "a complex amalgam of overlapping and competing languages . . . the heterogeneity [of the text] . . . is such that authorship becomes almost irrelevant—except that the author blends different languages." Borrowing Bakhtin's idea of the cultural utterance, Lev argues that culture authors texts; the film and its director are products and not producers of their historical moment. This theoretical framework guides him through 70s American cinema, the films he chooses as representative of this decade, and his analysis of them.

Since Lev sees the 70s as tumultuous years for women's liberation, war, and civil rights, he picks films like *An Unmarried Woman* (1978), *Patton* (1970), and *Shaft* (1971) because they expose what he considers to be the decade's most profound cultural tensions. Lev reads these and all of his selected films as reflections of a shifting culture. He argues that the cinema responded in one of two ways to the decade's sociocultural upheavals. Some films evoked cultural tensions in order to repress them. Lev calls these films conservative. Other films evoked cultural tensions in order to work through them. He calls these films liberal.

Lev then groups the films according to historically specific themes like "hippie generation" or "disasters and conspiracies." Sometimes the fit between film and theme is obvious. *Jaws* (1975), for example, obviously fits better in the "disaster and conspiracy" chapter than it would in the "hippie" chapter. Yet many of the films are grouped idiosyncratically and without explanation. *Easy Rider* is an easy pick for the "hippie generation" chapter, but seen another way, it could just as easily fit the "end of the sixties" chapter. *American Graffiti* (1973) might be a teen film akin to *Cooley High* (1975), but it takes place in the 50s and could therefore be read as a nostalgia film lamenting the end of adolescence.

Either way, Lev compares his thematically similar films to one another and then reads them against their historical backdrops. To give an example, in his chapter entitled "War," he reads *Patton* (1970) against *Apocalypse Now* (1979) because these films "bookend the decade of the 1970s with two very different pictures of the American military at war" and therefore convey conflicting visions of 70s attitudes towards war. In his final analysis of these films, he argues that *Patton* "builds a case for supporting the military both

historically and in the present," while *Apocalypse Now* conveys an anti-war message. For Lev, these films tell us that, according to Hollywood, late 70s America was more anti-war than pro-war in sentiment.

The benefit of this approach is that it challenges past ways of seeing 70s American cinema. The auteur approach so popular to this decade values the individual over the collective, but ignores the sociopolitical importance of individual films and directors without cohesive bodies of work. So, for example, although female and African-American filmmakers were active in the 70s, they had a harder time than white male directors did in finding funding and distribution for their films. These filmmakers were therefore less likely to direct the multiple features necessary for auteur-driven 70s film history.

In this way, the "Feminisms" and "From Blaxploitation to African American Film" chapters offer a welcome revision to 70s American cinema. In each of these chapters, which include close readings of films such as *Julia* (1977) and *Killer of Sheep* (1977), Lev elucidates the American cinema's complicated relationship to 70s feminism and civil rights. His focus on the relationship between social movements and film history makes the contributions of women and African Americans to 70s American film history impossible to ignore, and this hasn't always been the case.

On the other hand, Lev operates from a simplistic conception of how films respond to cultural shifts. He reads films as reflectors rather than mediators of cultural turmoil. "The disaster movie is a conservative response which 'solves' the 1970s malaise by drastically simplifying and reframing it." Or, "the vigilante film" uses "crime to attack social difference and mount conservative defenses of middle America." His reflection theory simplifies the relationship between film and culture, and takes the silent utterance for granted. If a 70s cultural issue didn't make the 70s cinema, according to Lev, then it must not have been that important.

If not in tone, then certainly in structure the book undermines both Bakhtin's notion of the cultural utterance and Lev's intentions in using Bakhtin. The opening chapter gives a synopsis of 70s cultural history, but there is very little cultural history in the chapters on film readings that follow. For the most part, Lev lets the films speak as authorities of 70s cultural history, and since he doesn't question this authority, the cinema's version goes unchallenged. The historical time line in the book's appendix doesn't help matters: it is meant to be supplementary, but ends up as the book's primary source of history. Lev wants to chart the "multiple branchings between film and history," but his analysis ultimately simplifies the relationship between the two.

In the epilogue of *American Films of the 70s,* Lev argues that the decade of the "1970s in American film was remarkable for its pluralism, its heterogeneity"; however, "in the more settled Hollywood of the late 1990s, we have lost the passion of that debate." Have we? If contemporary American cinema is homogeneous, as Lev argues that it is, then this alone should qualify it for debate. This aside, what Lev doesn't see through is that all debates about the past speak through feelings about the present. From this view, his book elucidates a desire for debate about the contemporary American cinema. We haven't lost the passion for debate. On the contrary, we're debating this passion as if it were of the past.

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A Chorus of Raspberries

British Film Comedy 1929–1939

By David Sutton. Exeter, U.K.: University of Exeter Press/David Brown Book Co., 2000. $75.00.

A Chorus of Raspberries is the latest in a series of British academic projects extending emphasis away from the wartime and postwar eras toward earlier decades previously dismissed by most scholars. Like Stephen C. Schafer's *British Popular Films 1929–1939* (1997), it examines a usually marginalized decade, but concentrates upon comedy. Sutton's survey contains a significant amount of information that shows the existence of a vibrant comedic world existing long before the *Carry On* films. He argues that the low status and critical invisibility of 1930s British comedies allowed them to deviate from mainstream aesthetic and ideological parameters to explore issues of class, gender, and sexuality absent in more prestigious texts. Sutton explores a diverse British cultural landscape employing theoretical approaches to examine pertinent music-hall origins and the varied class and gender structures of an area that has as many claims for reevaluation as the once marginalized "lost continents" of the Archers, Hammer horror, and British film genres. Much of the book's value lies in bringing to scholastic notice the work of comedians such as The Crazy Gang, Sydney Howard, Max Miller, Frank Randle, Arthur Lucan, Jack Buchanan, Jack Hulbert, and Cicely Courtneidge, as well as better-known names such as George Formby and Gracie Fields.

The first chapter examines British film comedy in relationship to its national culture. Unlike most scholars, Sutton believes that "components of a consensus around certain notions of 'realism,' 'nationality,' and 'quality' were in place by the end of the 1930s" (15), rather than during the wartime period. The 1939–45 period formed a crucible in which these ideas were tested. Aligning himself with Alan Lovell's critique of a new British cinematic orthodoxy privileging opposing values of realism and excess, Sutton argues that while British comedy films "indeed incorporate many 'excessive elements' foreign to other British genres, they also rely as much on a certain kind of 'realism,' on an appeal to the shared knowledge and experience of their audiences, as anything else" (21). This idea parallels Christine Gledhill's arguments, in *Nationalising Femininity* (1996), concerning links between 40s home-front films and melodramas. As Sutton demonstrates at the beginning of his second chapter's lengthy theoretical analysis, the theme of an "imagined

community" is not just confined to wartime or Ealing cinema, but "lies at the heart of much British comedy—whether it takes the form of the bond between music-hall performer and audience, [or] the working-class solidarity of early Gracie Fields films" (24). Divorcing his approach from Gerald Mast's traditional theories of "comic distance," Sutton aligns himself with the more social and popular theories of Pierre Bourdieu to define a comedic space uniting performer and spectator in an upturned social world overthrowing convention.

Viewing comedy as a hybrid force where satire and parody coexist, Sutton cites Mikhail Bakhtin to propose a reevaluation of British comedy as "the dialogical mode *par excellence*" (35). Familiar with American theories of classical Hollywood narration, screen comedy, and the cinema of attractions, Sutton sees 30s comedy as employing the last element, particularly in terms of its music-hall origins, which depart from the constraints of verisimilitude in specific ways. A tension between filmmaking and comic performance occurs, suggesting the survival of the "cinema of attractions" concept in a national cinema supposedly separate from it. Although recognizing that comic deviations from social or aesthetic norms occur "in the context of an institutionalized, legitimized space in which humor is permitted and perceived" (61), Sutton understands that the genre can neither be totally subversive nor completely conservative. Instead, he sees it (in ways similar to George Orwell's essay "The Art of Donald Gill") as a Sancho Panza counterpoint to official cultural discourses articulating "the contradictory in a way which other discourses cannot" (63).

Sutton's third chapter traces the music-hall origins of early British film comedy by commenting on comedians such as Pimple, George Robey, and George Formby, and the features of burlesque and parody which would be key elements of the later *Carry On* films. The author also takes issue with Michael Chanan's definition of a Golden Age of British cinema, since the medium was commercialized from the very beginning. He also critiques Andy Medhurst's belief in the nostalgic relationship between cinema and music hall. Rather, a complex process of change and adaptation was in force for both mediums. A subgenre of low-budget variety films developed from shorts into "features—which attempt to quite literally replicate the experience of a night out at a variety theatre, music hall or revue" (80). Thirties British film comedy thus attempted to reconcile Hollywood's model of a popular cinema with source material drawn from literature, stage, and music hall in both style and content. These films were highly popular with native audiences (if not serious critics), who were loyal to their homegrown performers.

Sutton's succeeding chapters examine working-class comedy, middle-class comedy, female comedy, and situation comedy from very thorough perspectives. Forgotten figures such as Leslie Fuller, Ernie Lotinga, Sydney Howard, and others not forgotten, such as George Formby, The Crazy Gang, and Will Hay, receive generous analysis. Sutton's comments on *Old Mother Riley MP* (1939) may even bring about a reevaluation of this Arthur Lucan series in which the comedian played an old woman trying to marry off her daughter (Kitty McShane), played by an actress he was married to in real life. Sutton sees the figure as "an embodied critique of both the self-satisfied middle-class world view and of a middle-class art with its emphasis on restraint and realism" (151). In examining middle-class comedies, Sutton gives long-overdue attention to the work of Aldwych farceurs Tom Walls and Ralph Lynn, debonair Jack Buchanan, and Jack Hulbert, and their subdued takes on issues of class and sexuality. The remaining chapter on situation comedy covers familiar ground in terms of Alexander Korda, but Sutton also includes Anthony Asquith's work on the Gainsborough comedy. A discussion of *The Lucky Number* (1933) brings to light a neglected magical working-class fantasy involving "expressive camera movements, a parodic and allusive musical score and a montage style clearly indebted to the Soviet cinema" (219). This, and the many other references to marginalized films needing attention, is one of the key achievements of this book.

As one of an increasing number of works investigating prewar British cinema in terms of the complex issue of national identity, David Sutton's book is a well-researched and significant work that fully supports the author's claim that comedy was a central genre for British 30s cinema. Hopefully, it will lead to retrospectives of comedians such as Frank Randle, The Crazy Gang, and Arthur Lucan as well as video/DVD releases of their films. But at many times, *A Chorus of Raspberries* reads too much like a dissertation. Some further editing would have been welcome, as well as some more detailed discussion of visual and verbal comedy techniques.

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The Cinema of Satyajit Ray

Between Tradition and Modernity

By Darius Cooper. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2000. $59.95 cloth; $29.95 paper.

It should be a good day for enthusiasts of world cinema when a major university press publishes a book on a non-European filmmaker of considerable repute, in this case, Satyajit Ray. (Andrew Robinson's 1989 book, *Satyajit Ray: The Inner Eye,* is a notable exception, distinguished by its biographical approach to Ray and his world.) And it should be an even better day for postcolonial film theorists when that book promises to "situate [Ray's oeuvre] within Indian aesthetics" and "to examine his work from a social and historical perspective." However, formulating a phenomenological approach to Ray's cinematic aesthetics, visuality, and narrative is a Herculean (or should I say Hanumanesque?) task by any measure. While I want to commend the author for undertaking such groundbreaking scholarship, I must caution that the study's promise goes largely unrealized. A more successful execution of that promise would have been most

valuable not only for Ray scholarship and Indian cinema, but more importantly, for theorists interested in formulating alternative ethnographies of film reception in today's complex mediascapes of globalization.

When the book's first chapter, "Between Wonder, Intuition, and Suggestion," elaborates on the aesthetic organization and reception theories of *Rasa* vis-à-vis the early texts of Ray's oeuvre, namely *The Apu Trilogy* (1955/56/59) and *Jalsagar* (1958), one is primed to expect a new ethnographic formulation. The most intriguing concept propounded in this chapter (and one that would be the most useful for cinematic spectatorship) is the concept of *camatkara,* or as Cooper defines it, "a sense of wonder or surprise at the presence of something which suddenly invades our field of consciousness" (19). Cooper, however, limits his discussion of *camatkara* to cinematic diegesis and film character:

> To Apu is given the dominant quality of *camatkara,* and it is through this sense of wonder that Apu is made to discover and enjoy not only the world that constantly surrounds him but also that other world created by his *prathibha* or imagination.

But what of the *spectator*'s sense of *camatkara*? After all, does not Ray's camera linger over some exquisite point-of-view shots and closeups, especially in these early films, precisely to facilitate the spectator's sense of *camatkara* at the spectacle of cinema itself? And were not Ray's films received with a comparable sense of *camatkara* by film-festival and art-house audiences in the 1960s?

I do not contest Cooper's central premise that Ray was influenced both by Western modes of filmmaking and his training in classical Sanskrit aesthetics at the Fine Arts Academy in Santiniketan. However, if Cooper was seeking to reconcile the apparently divergent trajectories of Western and Eastern artistic influence on Ray, he would have done well to extend Sanskrit aesthetics and narratology beyond the somewhat stilted textual analyses of the first chapter. What is more, he needs to explain why Sanskrit poetics (elaborated between the seventh and tenth centuries) may be pertinent to film analysis today. Surely the author's aim in situating Ray's work within a Sanskrit poetics was to invigorate scholarly and artistic interest in the filmmaker, not to ghettoize the latter within an obscure jargon that is difficult to integrate into the current vocabulary of film criticism and the prevailing discourse on cinema's ideological function.

A careful reading of the book enables one to occasionally detect the weak pulse of an argument suggesting that Ray's cinema seeks to construct a textual subject which is not teleologically driven or textually unified. This argument is at its most pregnant in Cooper's discussion of *The Nayak* (*The Hero,* 1966). However, instead of drawing from a very rich discussion of the *nayak* (which may also be translated as the "agent") from the *Natyasastra*—the original serial treatises on Sanskrit poetics composed between 100 B.C. and 500 A.D.—Cooper aborts this argument by resorting to a definition of the hero from none other than that text of high modernism, Northrop Frye's *The Anatomy of Criticism* (1957). One begins to wonder who is the "doubly colonized" subject of the book, the newly decolonized male protagonist of Ray's urban and bourgeois narratives, or the author himself, who may have started out by heroically attempting to unthink the exhausted paradigms of multicultural studies, but who, alas, lapses back into the habitual intonations of his master's voice.

Another refrain in the book is Cooper's defense of Ray against the criticism of the artistic and intellectual community, which argued strenuously for half a century that Ray was "not committed to politics." Despite Cooper's defense, the book does not answer the lingering question, Did Ray deliberately distance his work from the politics of social realism in Bengal, or was his universal humanism critical of the political climate of a trenchantly Marxist West Bengal within a putatively socialist postcolonial India? The fact remains that Ray's films found very limited audiences outside middle-class Bengali circles. In the early 1980s he was a favorite whipping boy for Hindu nationalists (one member of the Upper House of Parliament and a renowned film star from the 1940s and 50s even accused Ray of merely exporting images of India's poverty to the West), and ultimately his cinematic style did not lead to an artistic school or movement. The reasons for Ray's relative obscurity within India's film culture are complex and intriguing, and admirers of Ray's work in the West would have been interested in the details.

The charge against Ray of apolitical filmmaking deserves attention in another arena, however. When film critics and theorists of Indian cinema are critical of Ray, they are overtly or tacitly comparing him to the director Ritwik Ghatak, Ray's contemporary from the former East Bengal (Ray was from West Bengal) who is the undisputed radical of India's avant-garde cinema. It is not that Ray's filmmaking is apolitical in any absolute sense, rather that the criticism of the Indian literati stemmed from this implicit comparison with Ghatak's experimentation with cinematic form and the latter's brilliant embodiment of the experience of diasporic displacement in cinematic language and narrative. Cooper can disagree, of course, but one is left wishing he had given more cogent reasons for announcing Ray as "the filmmaker trying to discover cinema all over again from the margins not the center."

In chapters 2 and 3, Cooper traces the progression in Ray's oeuvre of the female and the male protagonist. These meta-narratives survey not only the traditional social, philosophical, and psychoanalytic roles assigned to gendered subjects in Indian society, but also the transformations that these positions are subject to and the familial upheaval that they have effected in Indian society. It is true that Ray's heroines are far more interesting and dynamic than his heroes. In Cooper's words, "Ray has given his Indian woman a voice to signify her process of *becoming* the New Indian Woman. Ray's Indian Man, by contrast, has become so defeated by this process of becoming that he seems to have lost his voice altogether." Thus, in Cooper's project, Ray's films are treated as an extended ethnographic study of Bengali society in (roughly) the second half of the twentieth century. Whether Satyajit Ray intended such an ethnographic project is, of

course, an open question. What is more problematic, given that Ray's films are increasingly being incorporated into the multicultural curricula of the Euro-American academy, is whether these films can indeed be read as reliable and legitimate ethnographies by Western audiences.

In the final two chapters of *The Cinema of Satyajit Ray,* Cooper returns to the question of Ray's political commitment through an extended discussion of two of the filmmaker's most overtly political films, *Shatranj ke Khilari* (1977) and *Sadgati* (1981), and the films of the early 90s. These Cooper reads as testimony of Ray's disillusion with, and indictment of, the *bhadralok,* or the Bengali "cultured" middle class. The very bourgeois culture that cultivated the literary genius of a Rabindranath Tagore (whose writings had inspired many of Ray's earlier films) and the cinematic vision of a Satyajit Ray is ultimately revealed to be parochial, hypocritical, and convention-bound. In recognizing the fading potential of a once illustrious *bhadralok* community, of postcolonial Bengal, and of the expanded market-forces-driven neocolonial India, Darius Cooper pays ultimate homage to Satyajit Ray's unflinching artistic integrity.

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Cutting Edge

Art-Horror and the Horrific Avant-Garde

By Joan Hawkins. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000. $49.95 cloth; $19.95 paper.

The central thesis of Joan Hawkins' *Cutting Edge: Art-Horror and the Horrific Avant-Garde* is that on the outer edges of horror—that is, in its lowest "splatter" and "sleaze" and highest "art" and "avant-garde" articulations—the presumed division between high and low culture does not in fact exist. At these extreme ends of the high/low horror spectrum, high and low culture, with their deployment of similar images, paradoxically intermingle. This idea is most clearly laid out in the first chapter, "Sleaze-Mania, Euro-Trash, and High Art." Here, Hawkins investigates both the divisions and the continuities between cinematic high art and low horror, specifically as it is manifested through "paracinema" video catalogues.

Video catalogues such as *European Trash Cinema* and *Something Weird Video* cater to the specialized fans of paracinema, and seem to particularly represent horror and sexploitation titles. Hawkins borrows the term paracinema from Jeff Sconce, who defines it as "less a distinct group of films than a particular reading protocol, a counter-aesthetic turned subcultural sensibility devoted to all manner of cultural detritus. . . . [T]he explicit manifesto of paracinematic culture is to valorize all forms of cinematic 'trash,' whether such films have been either explicitly rejected or simply ignored by legitimate film culture."[1] The catalogues in Hawkins' study are paracinematic in the sense that they act as distribution outfits for a "cinema apart," a set of film titles coveted by a fan community that defines its taste explicitly in opposition to mainstream cultural tastes and viewing habits. The marginally outlaw status of the catalogues (they sell bootleg copies of tapes that are legally unavailable otherwise) matches the peripheral standing of the majority of the films that they sell.

But the catalogues also offer for sale the film highlights of the various art cinema movements. One can find in the pages of the catalogues, Hawkins writes, a film title like *Tower of Screaming Virgins* (1968) alongside art horror such as *Vampyr* (1932), masterworks by Godard and Pasolini, and Buñuel's *Un Chien andalou* (1929). On the face of it, films from the likes of Corman and Antonioni could hardly be more diametrically opposed. But what these horror and art films tend to have in common, Hawkins notes, are spectacular cinematic displays designed to heighten the viewer's bodily response; the art films and the horror films both traffic in sensation. The catalogues exist, then, specifically as a mechanism for distributing films that trade in bodily affect, films that seek to jolt the spectating body with sensation, a sensation that apparently is "too much" to be channeled through video stores or other more legitimate means.

Hawkins is mainly concerned with the collapse of taste categories, which the variety of film titles within the pages of these catalogues suggests, and the larger question of what this erasure of high and low means within the politics of taste. Through an engagement with the work of Pierre Bourdieu, Lawrence Levine, and paracinematic authors such as V. Vale and Andrea Juno, Hawkins concludes, like Sconce before her, that the boundaries of cinematic "taste" exist as a mechanism for maintaining class and cultural power, and that paracinematic texts and communities, given form in the catalogues with their willful abandonment of taste hierarchies, represent sites of resistance to the hegemony of taste culture.

The existence of these video catalogues depends largely on the exclusion of film titles from mainstream distribution sites, but the catalogues' success is also part of a larger impulse for "collecting" that seems to characterize both the high and low ends of the home video market. In a chapter comparing the continuities and differences between paracinema and high-end collecting (characterized by the glossy Criterion laserdiscs that are fetishized objects for many cinephiles), Hawkins refutes the conventional assumption in cinephilic circles that home viewing is a degraded form of spectatorship. She argues instead that video collection and home video viewing are performances of desacralization—acts that erase the elitist uniqueness of the cinematic object and theatrical space.

The rest of the book moves away from the specifics of the video catalogues and into films that Hawkins presents as examples of the collapse of high and low culture. An implicit goal in these analyses is to question the generally held assumption that when art cinema and sleaze cinema use transgressive visual imagery, they deploy such imagery "differently." In her words, art films that seek excessive physical responses from the spectator "are deemed to have a higher cultural purpose, and certainly a different artistic in-

tent from low-genre blood-and-gore fests" (6). Her remaining chapters seek to deconstruct that assumption.

In a triptych of chapters, Hawkins focuses on the connections between European art cinema and low horror through an examination of a 1964 Pauline Kael essay that reveals the critic's elitist assumptions on questions of cinematic "taste," of the French horror film *Les Yeux sans visage* (*Eyes Without a Face,* 1959), and of the various "low" Spanish remakes of that film by Jess Franco. She uses Kael's complaint against contemporary audiences whose tastes are destroying classically narrative films to make connections between the "carnival" viewing practices of both horror patrons and avant-garde audiences. In this carnival spirit, both avant-garde and lower horror forms work to disintegrate official ideology, another linkage between the supposedly separate high and low cultural forms.

Hawkins investigates Georges Franju's *Les Yeux sans visage* as a text that occupies a "double niche," with simultaneous claims to both "art" and "splatter." Teasing apart the historical context of the film's production in postwar France, Hawkins asserts that the film exists at the nexus of a complex matrix of conflicting discourses about repressed cultural memories of French ideological collaboration with the Nazis. *Les Yeux sans visage* uses the low horror form to participate in larger issues—an engagement generally more consonant with "higher" cinematic articulations. The film's already ambiguous taste classification became further muddled when it traveled to the United States: while today *Eyes Without a Face* retains an aura of the art film within academic and critical circles, the paracinema community focuses not only on the film's arty lyricism but also on its gore.

The film's straddling of two cultural spaces leads Hawkins to discuss the works of Spanish director Jess Franco, whose sexually and violently explicit films embody the essence of low-horror paracinephilia. Though saddled with the burdens of low budgets and a predilection for exploitative material, Franco is considered by many fans in the most strident of auteurist terms. His films *The Awful Dr. Orlof* (1962) and *Faceless* (1988) obsessively plumb the thematic and narrative possibilities of *Les Yeux sans visage,* and reinscribe this art/splatter film in the low European horror/sex/sleaze tradition. By locating Spanish horror within the context of the Francisco Franco dictatorship, Hawkins argues that Jess Franco's horror is, like its French parent text, in dialogue with sociopolitical realities, a critique of Fascist power.

A third section of the book attempts to make clearer the connections between horror and avant-garde practices through analyses of *Freaks, Snuff,* Yoko Ono's *Rape,* and *Andy Warhol's Frankenstein*. Hawkins explains how these films from opposite ends of the cultural spectrum mine similar imagery, and how this shared currency of narrative tropes and visual language highlights the problematics of assuming that art films' use of disturbing imagery is necessarily more elevated and somehow more respectable.

Yoko Ono's avant-garde/vérité film *Rape* is the filmic result of an Ono-commissioned cameraman silently stalking an unknowing woman victim. Hawkins sees in *Rape*—conceived, executed, and exhibited as avant-garde art—the narrative template of the slasher film and an extraordinarily direct example of the ethical improprieties of some avant-garde practices. This layering of avant-garde and low-horror forms is further accentuated by Ono's appearance as an actor in the sexploitation horror film *Satan's Bed* (1965), made by Michael and Roberta Findlay, directors of the notorious *Snuff* (1976).

Snuff, of course, represents its own collision of horror aesthetics, cinema ethics, and questions of vérité/reality. A fiction film, it became a site where fictional diegesis—a character is "really" killed on screen—is collapsed/confused with reality, sparking a furor over the purported "real" existence of snuff films smuggled in from South America. The pairing of *Snuff* and *Rape,* then, is a productive one, yielding useful insights on the nature of the avant-garde and horror gaze, and illustrating the aesthetic and ethical kinship of low horror and avant-garde. Two more films that challenge the binary thinking that positions horror and art/avant-garde as opposite poles of a high/low cultural spectrum are *Freaks* (1932) and *Andy Warhol's Frankenstein* (1973). *Freaks* represents a unique case: the film's designation shifts from classic studio horror to exploitation to art film, showcasing how audience response and reception contexts can realign filmic meaning and taste categories, and underscoring the degree to which high art and horror both seek to break the same taboos. *Andy Warhol's Frankenstein* marks the movement of avant-garde aesthetics into commercial cinema; the film had commercial success both in art and mainstream theaters, distributing the Warhol/Factory cachet of "art" to a varied cross-section of audiences via its 3D Euro-pop gore.

Cutting Edge concludes with a brief rumination on the politics of taste as represented in the film *The People vs. Larry Flynt* (1997), in which the life and career of "low class" skin tradesman Larry Flynt of *Hustler* fame was turned into the subject of a slick, Academy Award–nominated biopic directed by Academy Award–winner Milos Forman and marketed to mainstream multiplex audiences. However, this brief account of the book's engagement with films does not adequately characterize the nature and scope of its treatment of these texts. Hawkins teases apart an individual film adroitly, exploring its historical context, its textual subtleties, and critical misappropriations. But the book's real contribution lies in its chapters on the catalogues, for these represent an extended analysis into the complexities of taste and class right at the source of distribution, illustrating how alternatives to mainstream marketing and distribution practices can produce counterhegemonic taste cultures. That said, these chapters would have benefited greatly by some concrete fan/audience research on actual consumption practices; instead they treat the catalogues, designed ultimately to sell product, only as texts meant to be read like magazines. Some fan research would also help to stitch together the catalogues chapters with the later film analyses. Most of the films under scrutiny in *Cutting Edge* date from the postwar through the 70s, and Hawkins focuses on their reception at the time of their various releases, making the current paracinematic observations of the first part of the book seem somewhat dislocated, theoretically and practically, from the films

themselves. More concrete research into the *contemporary* paracinematic consumption of these films could consider the shifted terms under which new and/or paracinematic audiences consume and interpret these historically and culturally contradictory texts, and perhaps shed new light on the collapse of high/low around low horror and high art.

In terms of theoretical grounding, the book suffers somewhat from what appears to be an effort to distance its project from Jeff Sconce's work on similar issues. While Hawkins acknowledges the *Screen* essay's influence on her work, references to it appear only sporadically throughout her text. A more complete engagement with Sconce's excellent investigation into the politics of a counter-cinema or paracinematic taste could only enhance Hawkins' own discussion of these issues. With the recent publication of Eric Schaefer's groundbreaking history of exploitation cinema, *Bold! Daring! Shocking! True!: A History of Exploitation Films, 1919–1959* (Duke University Press, 1999), it has become clear that there is much productive work—historical and theoretical—to be done on questions of "low" cultural media objects and the parameters and politics of "taste." Hawkins' work on the video catalogues indicates new avenues for thinking about contemporary distribution and exhibition/consumption practices of "trash," and her thesis about the blurring of the boundaries of high and low at the nexus of "horror" is certainly provocative. But while *Cutting Edge* persuasively asserts and convincingly illustrates that high art and low horror trade in similar images, the critical fall-out of acknowledging this confluence of high/low is less clear—particularly in relation to how taste categories continue to be constructed and experienced by consumers of media culture. Joan Hawkins' book, however, poses important questions and represents a significant work in the growing literature of serious critical examinations of cinematic taste, sleaze aesthetics, and the often entwined politics of art and trash cinema.

Harmony H. Wu writes on gender, sexuality, genre theory, and international horror hybrid films.

Notes

1. Jeff Sconce, "'Trashing' the Academy: Taste, Excess and an Emerging Politics of Cinematic Style," *Screen* 36, 4 (Winter 1995), 372.

Dangerous Dames

Women and Representation in the Weimar Street Film and Film Noir

By Jans B. Wager. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1999. $29.95.

With its 159 pages contained in a small book format, Jans B. Wager's monograph seems lightweight in more ways than one. Operating under the not particularly radical premise that film narratives as such offer a multitude of internally conflicted fantasies with which male and female spectators variously identify, Wager seeks to redeem the identificatory possibilities for women viewers within a body of films that have drawn attention, in more recent scholarship, primarily for their thematic preoccupation with fractured male subjectivity. The films she covers are drawn from an historical cross-section encompassing early Weimar cinema, American film noir of the 1940s and 50s, and more contemporary works that either reference the era of earlier film noir ("retro-noir") or couch a contemporary tale in its stylistic devices ("neo-noir"). Such film scholars as Patrice Petro and Kaja Silverman have already undertaken ambitious explorations of the representation of female subjectivity in films of these eras, focusing upon films purporting to address the female spectator (such as the so-called "street films" of the Weimar era and the mid-century classic "weepies" or "women's film"). Wager distinguishes her work by focusing upon films not specifically catering to female audiences, maintaining that these films, too, feature role models with whom women identify in meaningful ways even as these works appear to reflect primarily upon destabilized masculinities.

However, the author's endeavor is not merely part and parcel of a compensatory agenda within film scholarship—that of determining how women viewers in particular (historical and contemporary) extract satisfaction from these films—it also bespeaks a very personal investment. A self-professed "film noir aficionado," Wager wishes her readers to share in her evident enthusiasm for these films' often very striking and enigmatic female characters. While falling short of a rigorous theoretical articulation, her assessment of these women usefully distinguishes between the ubiquitous femme fatale—the castrating vamp who seeks to escape domestication—and what she coins as the *femme attrapée,* the woman who succumbs to the domestic realm and subservience within a patriarchal society. The femme fatale generally falls victim to some sort of traumatic experience that either destroys her or punishes her for exerting her will and acting upon her desire. In assessing the development of this stock figure in film history, Wager takes note (as have other scholars before her) of the postwar conservative backlash which befell the women of film noir, punishing them far more violently than their historical counterparts in Weimar film and rendering their demise a violent visual spectacle. Although the author seeks to undo the prevalent premise that these female characters merely comprise a symptom of male subjectivity, her own overriding preoccupation with the representation of female sexual initiative almost transforms the male protagonists into symptoms of female nymphomania.

Ultimately Wager's thesis, which seeks to identify a power within female characters that dwells beyond or in contradiction to their function as patriarchal tools, presumes some sort of valuation of what women historically and at present deem worthy identification—an endeavor fraught with subjective limitations. It further recalls the dated posture of cultural studies of the 1970s and early 80s, with its recuperative project of identifying positive and negative models of identification pursued at the expense of a more properly discursive assessment of subject positions. Unfortunately, in her effort to redeem neglected female characters of the

silver screen, Wager seems to reinforce some of the essentializing pitfalls of this analytical enterprise. In dwelling so emphatically upon the redeeming qualities of these characters (defined in Wager's universe through a demonstrated resistance to patriarchal domination or an appropriation of its values to further a female protagonist's interests), there is an implicit ideological bias toward indications of female agency and desire that reinforce a heterosexual framework. Given the increasing complexity of discourses on gender and identification, this "persistence of vision" (to adopt the author's favored phrase) seems unaffected by recent discussions in spectator studies, including that of the implicit lesbian subtext which underpins so many narratives of Weimar cinema and of film noir and yet which, in Wager's fixation upon robust expressions of heterosexual desire, is never considered as a facet for identification.

In her research of Weimar cinema, Wager covers Fritz Lang's *M* and Karl Grune's *The Street,* as well as two films often neglected in film criticism, namely Friedrich Murnau's *Variety* and Joe May's *Asphalt*. Film noir is addressed through John Huston's *Maltese Falcon,* Joseph Lewis's *Gun Crazy,* and Lang's *The Big Heat*. The final chapter, which casts a cursory glance at *Devil in a Blue Dress* and *The Last Seduction* as well as the German neo-noir *Happy Birthday Turke!*, rounds out the author's discussion by pointing to the enduring allure of the noir style and its adaptation as a vehicle for contemporary social concerns (the latter too neatly summarized by her allusions to racial and ethnic tensions). However, Wager's observations offer no closure to an ambiguously sketched thesis and, indeed, intensify the discomfiting sense of an overly personalized agenda, as when she comments about the German director Dorris Dorrie, "It is difficult, as a woman watching films directed by women, not to look for those hidden emotional truths that seem to address a shared point of view" (131). Casual remarks such as these may present a recurring stumbling block for otherwise sympathetic readers, who are asked to indulge such essentializing notions as that of a singular female perspective—one that purports to overcome barriers of culture, class, and gender, and which is implicitly mystical in content and innate in origin rather than the product of social discourses.

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Film Genre 2000

New Critical Essays

Edited by Wheeler Winston Dixon. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2000. $54.50 cloth; $17.95 paper.

The introduction to this collection of essays notices one of the more fascinating contradictions of the Hollywood product as of late: running times for feature films, especially "big" blockbuster films, seem to be expanding at a healthy rate, all the while that such films become increasingly homogenized around the generic forms of the action pic, romantic comedy, sci-fi thriller and so on. In brief, this means that there is often "more" of the Hollywood film in its length and less in terms of its innovative substance, leading to the strange experience for anyone watching and analyzing the recent Hollywood product of bearing witness to ever more convoluted forms of the production of sameness. Such forms of lavish interchangeability do not necessarily manifest themselves in more typical generic functions such as narrative, visual and acoustic registers, or even stardom in its classical studio mode, but are in fact about the expansive (and expensive) forms of innovation heralded around new imaging technologies.

If ever the force of industrial production were felt in the cinema, it is within this contradiction, and as an organizing sensibility this book takes as its mandate what editor Wheeler Winston Dixon describes as "the implicit message in contemporary genre films [that it] is rarely that which is signified by film's external or even internal narrative structure. What drives the thematic and structural concerns of genre filmmaking of the 1990s is the recovery of initial investment." Of course, the Hollywood product, and the genre film in particular, has always been about the recuperation of studio investment—no corporate film has been exempt from the iron law of the marketplace—but many of the current genre films bear the added weight of being the site where investment-intensive technological innovation is most concentrated. As Dixon points out, *The Phantom Menace* is a film marked by a remarkable "facelessness," so deeply committed was its project to a seamless continuity with its predecessors/successors; it could be nothing but a film about its own new forms of image manipulation, the film's story being so pre-known and encompassed both by the film's publicity and by the other films in the Star Wars "franchise." There is a remarkable inversion at work here, whereby what formerly was the bread-and-butter of corporate profit, the film marked by its generic over-determination, now becomes the apparently "singular" (but not really) blockbuster that tastes like last summer's fare but is heralded as something apparently "new." Complicating matters is the fact that one cannot deny that, indeed, there is something new at work in the manufacture and exhibition of these films—it's just not simply discovered in their formal features or narrative strategies.

It is within this important shift of the genre film that this collection of essays locates its intellectual project, and the contributions are a welcome set of commentaries on the current American popular cinema. Carefully avoiding that most tedious of possibilities for critical work on film genre—the taxonomy—these essays more helpfully focus on the ideological implications for the mass product *and* for film studies when the genre film mutates in the manner described above. The volume's essays are uniformly strong, with the anthology's authors focusing on a wide selection of dominant film genres from the past decade: particularly engaging are Marc Miller's contribution on the film musical of the 1990s, David Desser's piece on the martial arts film, David Sanjek's work on science fiction/horror films, Heather Addison's essay on children's films, Mark A. Reid's commentary on

black cinema, and Catherine L. Preston's essay on romance films. One topic shared by the several of the authors, emerging alongside the question of generic innovation/conservation, is that of violence and criminality; it seems that the volume might also have been conceived thematically in terms of seeing the 1990s as preoccupied with genre films as they express the social conflicts of the age: globalization, new forms of racism and sexism, fascistic masculinities. For example, Ron Wilson in his piece on crime films argues that films such as *Pulp Fiction* and *L.A. Confidential* reveal a nostalgic longing for some prior historical moment when it is fantasized that crime and violence were somehow more discernible as allegories of social confict. These films would seem to turn their vision toward the past to argue for a moment when violence could be recognized as either morally right or outlaw; in this such films reveal themselves as deeply conservatizing in their social vision. Elsewhere, Mark A. Reid argues that black cinema in the same period marks (relatively) widened opportunities for black filmmakers, but that such talent responds in different ways to the historical suppression of black-authored images through its own generic innovations, not least the production of hyper-violent black imagery and a countervailing tendency toward images of black domesticity and familialism.

For a comparatively compact volume, this book's breadth of vision feels comprehensive, and the collection's authors situate themselves in respect to a wide number of films and several important genres; pleasing is the sense that the volume's authors have waded through a lot of these films in order to make sense of their political and aesthetic aims. (I perhaps value this more than others—you have to bear a certain affection for a genre in order to endure its repetitions, and this writer appreciates those affective investments of others when they allow him to avoid having to see all the iterations of *Home Alone*.) One emerges from this anthology impressed by the authors' insistence that thorough-going ideological critique of these forms is deserved if not urgent, for now the Hollywood product is financed and distributed on a global scale and the success of, say, a Disney cinematic commodity hinges less on its box-office success in the United States and more on its capacity to sell *Aladdin* merchandise in Japan. Yet, if the meanings of the new genre film are not solely to be found in its formal innovations, one discovers through these essays that ideological critique, concerned as it is with questions of representation (of social practice, of capital, of labor) finds itself, as it has been since Marx, engaged not only with the interests of the text's vision of the world but also with how the industries that manufacture these films have interests in how they themselves come to be represented. *Film Genre 2000,* bearing in its title attention to the millennial sense of the new genre film, provides important new work for readers of genre criticism, film history, and those simply interested in whether Woody Allen might ever make another musical.

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Flaming Classics

Queering the Film Canon

By Alexander Doty. New York: Routledge, 2000. $80.00 cloth; $18.95 paper.

I found Alexander Doty's *Flaming Classics: Queering the Film Canon,* a collection of essays on such films as *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* and *Psycho,* entertaining, rigorous, and intelligent scholarship. Scholarship that is both entertaining and rigorous is rare. As Doty writes in *Flaming Classics*' introduction, the unspoken prohibition against personal writing in scholarly work relegates "our investments in, and enthusiasms for, film and popular culture to the realm of hidden pleasures. It's as if showing too much interest in what we are writing about somehow undermines our credibility as intellectuals" (11). In *Flaming Classics,* however, Doty successfully walks the tightrope between being a scholar and being a fan, and the result is a book that makes chestnuts like *The Wizard of Oz* and *Citizen Kane* fresh and fun again.

Doty's central challenge to traditional notions of scholarly objectivity is the autobiographical information he includes in *Flaming Classics*. He begins the book by noting that Hollywood movies gave him "as much pleasure as they did pain and bad ideological lessons," and then tells a story from his childhood about the gender behavior he learned from watching *River of No Return* on television as an example of Hollywood's colonization of our collective unconscious (1). (But Doty has his revenge on heterosexual patriarchy: when he and his sister act out *River of No Return,* they take turns playing the Marilyn Monroe role.) Later in the book, Doty charts the growth of his queer identity, from self-loathing sissy to "Friend of Dorothy" to activist, according to his responses to the various characters in *The Wizard of Oz*. His opinion of the Cowardly Lion, for instance, shifts from embarrassment ("When he sang about how miserable he was to be a 'sissy,' I cringed") to a celebration of his unabashed flamboyance ("King of the Forest? He was more like a drag queen who just didn't give a fuck") (50).

Mixing autobiographical and academic modes of writing isn't a new idea; in film studies, it received an elegant theoretical justification (along with other forms of non-scholarly écriture) in Robert Ray's *The Avant-Garde Meets Andy Hardy,* and queer writers like B. Ruby Rich, Richard Dyer, and Robin Wood habitually interject first-person opinions and stories into their film analyses. What makes Doty's work a notable example of this approach is his snappy, free-wheeling prose and his willingness to talk frankly and personally about theoretical skirmishes. Here's Doty on the academic contests that can arise between heterosexist and queer interpretations:

> I was discussing stardom with a graduate student, when she asked me to name some gay cult stars besides Judy Garland. As I began to rattle off a list, she stopped me at one name. "Wait!" she said.

> "Don't take Bette Davis away from us, too!" Before this, I hadn't thought of gay culture—or gay cultural studies—as taking anything away from anyone. Nor had I wanted to believe that anyone apart from white, straight patriarchal types would think that stars and texts were commodities to be owned by one group of cultural readers or another. Was I ever naive: I guess most people out there really are lifting up their leg or squatting to mark their popular culture territory. (53)

As a white, straight guy with liberal leanings, I read this passage with embarrassment; it reminded me of a discussion I'd had with a gay friend about *Red River*. When my friend argued for a homoerotic subtext in the scene where Montgomery Clift and John Ireland compare the sizes of their gun barrels, my response was something like, "Do you really need to read *that* into the film?" Naturally, I assumed that straight readings were normal and self-evident; that gun barrels weren't phallic; that reading homosexuality into *Red River* would somehow poison the pleasure I got from the film; and that Howard Hawks was clearly a straight-as-an-arrow macho director instead of the sexually polyvalent auteur described by Wood, Gerald Mast, Todd McCarthy, and Doty himself in *Flaming Classics*' chapter on *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*. In other words, it wasn't so long ago that I'd had a lot invested in my patriarchal side ("Don't take Howard Hawks away from us, too!"), and I appreciate Doty's reminder that interpretation shouldn't force texts into reductive either/or, heterosexual/homosexual categories.

Autobiographical criticism can be hazardous—it can lead to navel-gazing and an undue emphasis on subjective experience and identity politics—but Doty's personal anecdotes and observations rise out of intelligent close readings of individual films. In his examination of *Caligari,* for instance, he argues that the much-maligned framing story simultaneously reflects Francis's homosexuality (through his attraction to Alan and his interest in the "unnatural" relationship between Caligari and Cesare) and represents his attempts to avoid and suppress his gay desires. And although previous critics consider the central conflict of *The Red Shoes* to be a romantic competition between Julian Craster and Boris Lermontov for the affections of diva Victoria Page, Doty instead defines Lermontov as a Svengali who expresses himself through Page/Trilby and who represents a life of "queer artistry" (117) rather than straight love and marriage. I found these readings and others (including the idea of a jealous, gay Jed Leland in *Citizen Kane*) both surprising and convincing. A minor complaint I have with *Flaming Classics,* however, is that the essays at the end of the book are less entertaining—the high point of Doty's autobiographical investment in a text comes in his essay on *The Wizard of Oz*—and less surprising because they zero in on films (*Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and *Psycho*) that have been discussed in queer terms by earlier critics.

As Roland Barthes and others have pointed out, scrupulous close readings lead us back to history, and Doty wisely explores the larger implications of the subjects that he broaches in his readings. In his introduction, he presents a taxonomy of different meanings for the word "queer" in theories of popular culture, and in the process offers up a structure for *Flaming Classics* as a whole. His last and most extreme definition of queer, for instance, is reserved

> . . . to describe those aspects of scholarship, cultural readership, production, and textual coding that seem to establish spaces not described by, or contained within, straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, or transgendered understandings and categorizations of gender and sexuality—this is a more radical understanding of queer, as queerness here is something apart from established gender and sexuality categories, not the result of vague or confused coding or positioning (I would contend that Jack Smith's *Flaming Creatures* is a queer avant-garde film by this definition). (7)

And it is this queerness that Doty invokes in his final essay when he discusses *Psycho*: Norman Bates is a conflation of stereotypes (he's a sissy mama's boy, a transvestite, a victim of intense Oedipal desire, and a man "transsexualized" through constant doubling with Marion Crane), queer precisely because his sexuality never settles down into an easily definable category. Yet this fluid definition of queer has relevance beyond Norman Bates, of course, and I found myself productively wondering if, for instance, the swimming pool orgy at the end of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* and the gender-swapping spaceship sex in Gilbert Hernandez's X-rated comic book *Birdland* qualified as moments outside of "established gender and sexuality categories."

Doty also discusses, and queers, the personalities and production circumstances of the films he so closely analyzes in *Flaming Classics*. He claims that the garish Technicolor fashion show in *The Women* is an example of George Cukor's queer, "antinaturalist" visual style (87), and argues that the bisexual frisson between Lorelei and Dorothy in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* is an outgrowth of the closeness that developed between Jane Russell and Marilyn Monroe during the making of the film. Most provocatively, Doty uncovers evidence that the collaboration between Archers Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger was shot through with strong homosocial/sexual emotions: "Powell's correspondence to Pressburger is filled with touching and funny salutational endearments: 'My angel Imre,' 'Dearest One of Both,' 'My Dear First Class Male!' 'Old Austrian Cock'" (111). And yet, throughout all these production "outings" and theoretical interventions, we never lose sight of Doty's central message: that queerness is already always present in every text, and deserves the same amount of attention and respect as a text's straight elements do. In other words, sometimes a gun barrel is more than just a gun barrel, especially when it belongs to Monty Clift.

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Hitchcock's Notebooks

An Authorized and Illustrated Look Inside the Creative Mind of Alfred Hitchcock

By Dan Auiler. New York: Avon Books, 1999. $30.00.

Everyone knows movies are collaborative, polyvalent, and multiform; it's only in our stubbornly powerful experiences of them that they can seem autonomous, homeostatic, or singly begotten. *Hitchcock's Notebooks*—a tantalizing, frustrating glimpse through a narrow chink in the thick door of a hallowed vault—will not doom the myths of the auteur to their final resting place, but the book tellingly reveals the many negotiations, improvisations, sleights-of-hand, and slipknots that went into the crafting of Hitchcock's exacting, austerely precisionist films. To that extent, it contributes some compelling new information to both the meanings of the films and the image of their maker.

The standard version of Hitchcock as an impish sadist, reveling in the Dark Side of Genius, is regrettably entrenched by now; maybe it is only because of that reputation, but the pictures from the archive that show Hitchcock as a figure of foreboding are the ones that stand out most strikingly here. Consider a shot from the set of *Dial M for Murder*: there he is, inclined in the director's chair like a malignant toad, face twisted with rancor, stern hand sweeping across the photograph's blurry foreground, blunt finger extended in the lordly demand the whole picture declaims—*Get lost*! But there's enough of Hitchcock in dialogue with his collaborators in the book to offset the image of the neurotic, magisterial potentate jealously guarding his creative dominions. Especially in contacts with his writers, Hitchcock could be gracious, personable, sometimes downright oleaginous—until, as we'd already learned from *Me and Hitch*, Evan Hunter's recently published account of his work with Hitchcock on *The Birds*, he thought they'd crossed him.

At times, at least in Dan Auiler's selections for *Notebooks*, these transactions appear to be decidedly, if suggestively, unilateral. Samson Raphaelson's letters regarding his own work on the script of *Suspicion* address Hitchcock with intimacy and affection ("Dear Hitch . . . blessings on you and Alma"), but though no replies are included from Hitchcock, potentially unfavorable ones are implied by the fact that nearly all of Raphaelson's suggestions are ignored in the finished film. And a good thing, too. Here's Raphaelson on an early scene: "When Lina overhears her father and mother calling her a spinster—if, before Johnny is discovered, we could *see* him walking toward her, we would not have the feeling he has overheard. . . . I don't think that is good. If she thinks he has heard her parents calling her a spinster, she wouldn't be likely to kiss him." But in the film, Hitchcock goes in exactly the opposite direction, *heightening* the ambiguity: a quick, blithe pan reveals Johnny standing at the window beside Lina, where we had no idea he was, and he smirks with what could be pity, derision, conspiratorial sympathy, or just plain acknowledgment—and that is exactly what gives the desperate, impulsive kiss its perverse poignancy. "I don't think she should say the line about 'Is it a painful death' [at the dinner party]," Raphaelson cautions elsewhere. But Hitchcock keeps the line—indeed, underscores it—and in Joan Fontaine's exquisite delivery, hesitant but direct, it becomes one of the film's unforgettable moments, transforming a Gothic melodrama into a complex, moving study of human vulnerability.

Raphaelson objected to the line because he thought it denied the character's volition: "That [line] comes from a supine, licked woman." A similar omission in the finished film from Thornton Wilder's script for *Shadow of a Doubt* begins to suggest a pattern. In the script, as excerpted in *Hitchcock's Notebooks*, during the final confrontation on the train, when Uncle Charlie tries to push Charlie from the moving vehicle, Wilder has her repeat, "You won't! You won't!" and suggests that Uncle Charlie "weakens" because of her expression of determination and resolve. In the film, there is no such implication, and the mordant, breathtaking scene evokes Hitchcock's dark poetry of helplessness—his alternately forlorn and corrosive chronicles of the power of the precarious in human experience—far more strongly than it does Wilder's lyric celebrations of the indomitable pluck of the small-town spirit.

The tension in Hitchcock's reputation between popular entertainer (the "master of suspense") and serious artist is repeatedly visible in the material gathered in this collection, though it seems to have caused only passing anxiety on Hitchcock's part. He prided himself on perfectionism, the evidence here suggests, but did not, at least until very late in his career, fret over mistakes beyond the next "project," and though he welcomed the nod of posterity, he nursed a showman's faith in the public's receptiveness and, at times, its gullibility. We see him paying some attention to reviews on occasion, but he's always willing to write them off in exchange for the audience's favor. At the same time, he doesn't appear to have lavished any excessive respect on the public; when his assistant, Peggy Robertson, noticed a crew member standing in the background of one of the long takes in the finished print of *Under Capricorn,* "Hitchcock didn't seem at all disturbed. He said, 'Peggy, we've seen this film countless times and we've just noticed it. All we're concerned with is getting it by the audience once—they'll never notice.'"

Hitchcock worried about being typed as only a director of suspense thrillers, but turned down the chance to direct *Anastasia,* among other projects that might have demonstrated greater range. Working in popular forms such as melodrama and the thriller, the director must have felt himself beset by philistinism at every point in his career, and some of his impatience registers here, though most often in relation to underlings who fail to follow his orders, or toadies who work to enforce the demands of labor unions. We can only imagine Hitchcock's response to the surpassing idiocy of George Schaefer's suggestion for the ending of *Suspicion*: "'Low as I have sunk,'" Johnny says to Lina in Schaefer's fervid imaginings, "'realizing that you would die for me in this way makes me know that I am not fit to live'—With

which he puts the glass to his lips and empties it, falling on the bed unconscious."

Lest one conclude, however, that Hitchcock himself always dependably exhibited personally the artistry so amply visible in his films—the highbrow sheep among lowbrow goats—turn to a document like his revised treatment for *Marnie,* reprinted here. The treatment reveals a lot about the development of that project, but what is mainly on view, rather painfully, is a sensibility fraught with penny-dreadful sentiments and dime-novel clichés, complete with wildly melodramatic plot revelations and suggested dialogue of Schaeferesque awfulness: "She was leading a double life, Marnie. When the baby came, it knocked the lid off that make-believe world of hers."

Part of the point here, of course, is that Hitchcock's artistry is visual, not verbal, and *Hitchcock's Notebooks* reminds us over and over again, as did Hunter's memoir, exactly how, and in what ways, this is the case. The neo-expressionist ardor of *Marnie*, for instance, overwhelms the trite romance-novel conceptions of the film's origins on paper. Indeed, Auiler errs in dispersing the materials across separate chapters with headings like "Building the Screenplay" and "Preparing the Visual," because doing so fails to emphasize, or even to suggest, the crucial interdependency of these phases in the construction of Hitchcock's films. John Michael Hayes (scriptwriter on *Rear Window, To Catch a Thief, The Man Who Knew Too Much,* and *The Trouble with Harry*) emphasizes this interdependence in a quotation included here: "Hitchcock taught me how to tell a story with the camera and tell it silently." Hitchcock's own most important preproduction contributions were shot lists accompanied by visual sketches. Consider in particular one for the Ambrose Chapel scene in *The Man Who Knew Too Much,* where the shot breakdown is accompanied by a visual conception of the space, its symmetry and imposing vertical construction anticipating the set later designed for the film itself.

The chapter on building the screenplay shows Hitchcock's involvement in the writing process to be more intricate than many could have supposed, but it does so, most often, by juxtaposing variant drafts without providing much guidance or even speculation on the editor's part regarding how to interpret the changes. One of the real finds of the collection is certainly the excerpt from Wilder's handwritten script for *Shadow of a Doubt* (though this is sometimes illegibly reproduced in the book), but Auiler's brief comment on it that "the film has only the slightest variations on what's excerpted here" is puzzling at best. If that were the case, then why not devote the 25 pages these excerpts occupy to some material that diverges more significantly from the finished film?

In truth, though, the differences should certainly enrich viewers' sense of the film's intentions and meanings. In the script's dinner scene, many of Emma's key lines from the film are simply not there, and the tone of Charlie's outburst at her father in the scene is completely different from its counterpart in the film. In the script's climax, Federal agent Jack actually witnesses Uncle Charlie's death, a major variation on the film's action, and the final speech, though admittedly subtle in its differences from that of the film, yields large implications for the key critical problem of the film's ending, its relation to the conventions of the traditional Hollywood "happy ending." Readers will decide for themselves how "slight" such variations are, but such comments often suggest that Auiler is not sufficiently attuned to Hitchcock studies to know what the big critical issues really are.

Readers should also be aware in general that it is best to approach Auiler's commentary with caution. Its weaknesses range from outright mistakes to seeming misrepresentations to arguable errors of judgment that mar the selection and arrangement of materials in important ways. There is also a certain insensitivity to nuance, which can come in more literal ways, as when Auiler, transcribing a production conference on *Marnie* and apparently missing Hitchcock's musical metaphors, transcribes "leitmotif" as "light motif." It's also clear that Auiler has decided overall to try to keep a low editorial profile, and the reader welcomes the points where he steps aside to let the material speak for itself. Too often, though, Auiler's cryptic or inaccurate comments on the selections obscure rather than clarify principles of inclusion, and his self-effacement tellingly gives way to baffling bouts of self-promotion. Auiler's modesty is further undermined, too, by the fact of his identifying himself as the "author" of this book, rather than its editor, though his written contributions make up considerably less than one-tenth of the text, and selection and arrangement clearly constitute the bulk of his labors.

Because so much material inevitably had to be left out, the reader must trust the editor of this book as a guide to an unusual degree. Auiler does little to build such trust. He doesn't tell us enough about what has been omitted, or describe the logic of his choices, as if they were somehow self-evident. He does not include postproduction materials on *Under Capricorn*—that least appreciated among Hitchcock's great films—because, he tells us, they seem "innocuous," but that's a word one could use to describe much of what *has* been selected often merely to corroborate already well-known facts. Nor does Auiler provide the compelling personal responses to Hitchcock's work that might have lent resonance or conviction to his editorial presence behind the project. His take on Hitchcock's work is rather ordinary, apart from some quirky chronology (the "golden decade" of Hitchcock's career is said to run from 1954 to 1962, *Rear Window* to *Psycho,* a pretty slim decade at a mere eight years, even padded with that extraneous two, giving the impression that Auiler thinks *Psycho* was released in 1962).

In the last analysis, then, this is a book that largely confirms rather than revises our notions about Hitchcock. We come to the end with a keen and not unexpected sense of Hitchcock's occasional pettiness, frequent glibness, and consummate professionalism. The Herrick Library of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences holds enough material on Hitchcock, no doubt, to fill dozens of books like this one. Maybe another book, and another editor, will

someday help us to trace the exact moment—some time before the camera begins to whir or after the lights go down—when that professionalism turned into visual artistry, the glibness into depth, the pettiness into poetry.

James Morrison's book *Passport to Hollywood* (SUNY, 1998) was selected as a *Choice* Outstanding Academic Book in Film for 1999. His next book, *Broken Fever,* a memoir, will be published by St. Martin's Press.

Italian Film

By Marcia Landy. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2000. $64.95 cloth; $22.95 paper.

Marcia Landy is a leading figure in Anglo-American Italian film scholarship, having been one of the first American scholars to elaborate the richness of Italian film production during the Fascist regime in her book *Fascism in Film: The Italian Commercial Cinema, 1931-43* (1986). She returned to this subject in her recent text, *The Folklore of Consensus: Theatricality in the Italian Cinema, 1930-1943* (1998). Her latest book is a synoptic history of Italian film, titled, simply, *Italian Film,* and is part of Cambridge University Press's new series, "National Film Traditions," edited by David Desser.

Landy's boldest step in this work—and the one that most clearly distinguishes hers from other histories of Italian film—is also her most problematic: she has organized her book thematically rather than in the linear, historical framework used by historians like Peter Bondanella in *Italian Cinema, From Neorealism to the Present* and Mira Liehm in *Passion and Defiance, Film in Italy from 1942 to the Present*. Landy seems to be defending this crucial decision when she writes in her preface:

> My examination is primarily concerned with exploring the narratives, images, and sounds and their relation to other cultural forms through which this "fictive entity" known as Italian cinema has been disseminated and recognized as national. The book explores the persistence of various styles and motifs and the differing ways these have been expressed in Italy from the silent cinema to the present. (xiv)

The themes range from the representation of gender to the use of landscape to the role of the family in Italian film. In many ways such an approach is refreshing. Too often histories of Italian cinema rely on a teleological template that casts everything in the silent period as a harbinger of Fascism and everything after *Rome, Open City* (1945) as a recoil from the same. Oddly enough, such histories rarely say anything substantial about films produced during the Fascist period. As Landy claims, *Italian Film* "does not gloss over or underestimate films from the years of Fascism" (xiv), and her passages on films made during the 20 years of the Fascist regime are some of her most compelling. Her sensitive reading of a rarely-discussed Fascist period satire, *Sorelle Materassi* (Ferdinando Poggioli [1943]), a film which she argues "makes visible the grotesque and theatricalized character of dearly held values," suggests that this period of filmmaking merits the attention she has given it here and elsewhere.

Two chapters in particular are the book's most original: "The Landscape and Neorealism, Before and After" and "Gramsci and Italian Cinema." The subject of landscape is a central issue that has received scant attention in Italian film studies. Certainly location is an important feature of films produced in every part of the world, but in Italian film the issue of cinematic location assumes a special density due to its participation in a centuries-old art-historical tradition of representing the Italian landscape, and especially the cityscape. Landy's discussion of the landscape covers films from every major period of Italian cinema (for example, *Napoli d'altri tempi*, by Amleto Palermi [1938] and Federico Fellini's *Roma* [1972]), but the chapter's forcefulness is vitiated by omitting several key films (Roberto Rossellini's *Paisa,* Luchino Visconti's *Ossessione,* and Michelangelo Antonioni's *Il Grido*) whose representation of the landscape are much more crucial and complex than the examples Landy has chosen. Nonetheless, Landy's focusing on the question of landscape goes far in drawing attention to this underresearched area of Italian film history.

The chapter on Gramsci redresses a blind spot in Liehm's and Bondanella's histories in which he is referenced only fleetingly and almost exclusively in connection to Visconti and Pasolini. In *Italian Film,* Landy gives the patron saint of the Italian Communist Party his full due, arguing that "No other figure's ideas played such a large role in the development of the post-World War II Italian cinema" (149). Landy supports this claim with analyses of films by Mario Monicelli, Ermanno Olmi, the Taviani brothers, as well as Visconti and Pasolini. Landy demonstrates that these filmmakers' relationships to modernism and modernity are inflected by a Gramscian consciousness that resists romanticizing history and sentimentalizing the working class.

Landy's thematic chapters do produce some disconcerting effects. While the organization by motif manages to avoid the evil of teleology, it runs the risk of invoking the specter of synchrony. The book's organization, in fact, makes it difficult to get a sense of the developmental trajectory of Italian film history. The historical contexts of individual films are rather hastily sketched, a method of economy which, to be fair, is forced on any general national film history. But in a history that is not arranged chronologically, the effect is that the precise historical distinctions between films begin to break down. Films from different periods seem to be frozen side by side in the same amber.

Italian Film is a book for a broad readership, and should be read alongside one of the standard histories of the field as a provocative conceptualizing tool. It will encourage students of Italian cinema to draw connections across periods and genres; in the hands of inquisitive and historically informed students, Landy's book could do much to help them move beyond the prosaic *données* of Italian film history.

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Kurosawa

Film Studies and Japanese Cinema

By Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000. $64.95 cloth; $21.95 paper.

Akira Kurosawa, one of the most famous of all directors, has had numerous studies and books devoted to him. What is surprising is not the publication of yet another major book, but that there haven't been more, particularly since his death in September 1998. I wonder if, despite his longevity, Kurosawa isn't seen as a relic from an earlier age of film culture (a humanist age), and if doing him justice would require extensive archaeological digging to uncover relevant contexts. Yoshimoto's book undertakes this, and more, seeking a location for Kurosawa within film studies and other areas.

Kurosawa: Film Studies and Japanese Cinema is nearly flawless. A single book, even a big one, cannot exhaust all the complexities surrounding Kurosawa. It is enough for now that Yoshimoto points out some of the most intriguing places in the director's world, including areas of "anxiety" in Japanese and foreign language criticism. Incorporating questions of authorship, genre, narrative structure, popular memory, and a close scrutiny of images, Yoshimoto folds discussion of the films into broader questions about Japanese cinema and its use value for Western film studies.

As a comprehensive account of all Kurosawa's films, the book runs chronologically, individual films taking up chapters of widely varying lengths. This has the virtue of completeness, covering all the films without slighting lesser-known ones such as *The Quiet Duel* (1949), *Scandal* (1950), and *One Wonderful Sunday* (1947, inspired by an obscure D.W. Griffith film). A film-by-film organization is convenient for reference and teaching, enabling quick access to desired works. But if one wishes to read straight through, this takes a toll: thirty films, one after another, is daunting. To avoid needless repetition of his main points, Yoshimoto has opted for this, but a sustained argument, especially across a large number of films and issues, has a structural role to play as well as a rhetorical one. Like a good film script, some redundancy serves to keep readers on track.

The structure of the book also signals Yoshimoto's determination to stick to the films rather than straying into critical biography. Still, the issue of authorship, and auteurism, plays a major role. There is insightful discussion of the uses of autobiography, where Yoshimoto uses the notion of the "autobiographical pact" (Philippe Lejeune, 1989). More like a ploy than a pact, it describes an artist who casts doubt on his autobiographical writings, interviews, and recollections, the better to commend his oeuvre as a reflection on himself. Thus, parallels between Kurosawa's life and films (e.g., *Dreams,* 1990), not only in substance but also in pattern, technique, and form, enable the questioning of memory and autobiography as privileged touchstones. In this paradoxical way, Yoshimoto argues, authorship is established.

In this way, too, the primacy effect of memory (over imagination) and of originality (over adaptation or translation) are brought up short. The interrogation of such binaries is connected to Kurosawa's reputation as an individualist director who found his true voice in the postwar era of reconstruction and Japanese modernization. It also problematizes easy discriminations between prewar Japanese militarism and postwar pacificism and democracy, punctuated by *tenko* (conversion) that supposedly washes away wartime culpability. This issue is discussed fully in two of the book's best chapters, on *No Regrets for our Youth* (1946) and *Stray Dog* (1949).

Another strong point is Yoshimoto's engagement with published writings in both English and Japanese. We learn much about critical appropriations of Kurosawa and Japanese cinema by Richie, Burch, Sato, Desser, Prince, Bordwell, et al. Without patronizing, Yoshimoto scrutinizes their premises and analyses, revealing overlooked aspects of films and film criticism alike. For example, he summarizes the conventional positions on *High and Low* (1963): one formalist (Burch) and the other humanist (Richie). The dualism of this form-content dichotomy is then woven back into the film's structure to reveal a work that doubles back on itself. The narrative and visual structures of *High and Low* anticipate the antinomies represented by contradictory critical readings. Both critics may be right, but as the title suggests, *High and Low* ("Heaven and Hell" in Japanese) is more than one film. The banality of its themes and the overtness of its formal juxtapositions, which "produces a perceptual shock effect" (309), are necessary elements in what is described as a kind of kinetic calculus:

> In Kurosawa's films, a limited set of simple motifs are presented first, and then they go through a series of transformations. Every time basic motifs are repeated, they are slightly displaced and changed. The film as a whole consists of their variations and permutations, which are tightly interconnected in fuguelike construction. (310)

Is it plausible to see *High and Low* as a form of serial composition? Yoshimoto brings it off, but this level of abstraction might be a difficult sell to Kurosawa fans or students.

Yoshimoto is outstanding in the way he handles problems of theatricality: Kurosawa's relations with Kabuki (*Men Who Tread on the Tiger's Tail,* 1945), with Noh (*Throne of Blood,* 1957; *Kagemusha,* 1980), with Shakespeare, and with *jidaigeki* (period drama) as a whole. He argues that *jidaigeki* is not a bastion of tradition and feudalism: "The assertion that by idealizing feudalistic social relations *jidaigeki* functioned as an ideological apparatus of Japanese militarism is basically a fiction" (224). Put categorically, this statement is too sweeping, but it is true that *jidaigeki*'s incarnation in silent film was a rebellion of the popular (*taishu,* the masses) against conservative theatrical forms. The unruly, youthful, extremely popular *chambara eiga* (swordfighting film) of the 1920s was "disdained and suppressed" by the militarists in the 1930s (224). As a mass consciousness emerging in the 20s and as a postwar genre of topknots and swords, *jidaigeki* was doubly persecuted by Japanese militarists and the American Occupation. It was, Yoshimoto writes, a scapegoat.

Theatricality also comes out in discussions of *The Bad Sleep Well* (1960) and *High and Low* as a way of foregrounding artificial, carefully orchestrated spectacles signifying the corruption of Japanese public life. (Compared to uses of theatricality in the films of Oshima and other New Wave directors, Kurosawa's techniques are subtle and naturalistic.) Kurosawa stages the hollowing-out of contemporary society, but the use of theatricality in *jidaigeki* is complementary: a filling-in that reinvigorates empty forms. Beginning with *Seven Samurai* (1954), *jidaigeki* was injected with such detail, movement, and strong, realistic character that the film remained for years an expensive anomaly; only when *Yojimbo* (1961) and *Sanjuro* (1962) found box-office success did this earlier epic begin to transform *jidaigeki* conventions, particularly the formulaic, star-studded Toei studio *jidaigeki*. As if to signal Kurosawa's detachment from run-of-the-mill Japanese films, Yoshimoto gives the last word on *Seven Samurai* to Andrei Tarkovsky and André Bazin (who in turn compares it favorably to John Ford's *Stagecoach*).

It isn't hard to get through the provocative first part of Yoshimoto's book, "Japanese Cinema in Search of a Discipline." Yoshimoto places the field of Japanese cinema within postwar East Asian studies, comparative literature, and humanistic/poststructural film studies. He traces institutional constraints, mainly from universities, on formulations of what Japanese cinema, as an object of Western scholarship, can be. At bottom, film studies, in constituting itself as an academic discipline, *needed* Japanese cinema. Japanese cinema is, or was, not just part of (as an addition or parallel development) but *constitutive* of film studies. To be legitimated as an academic discipline, film studies needed to universalize. University courses and scholarly publications constructed film as an international art form; it was not faceless commercial entertainment, but modernist work by auteurs such as Bergman, Fellini, and Kurosawa that called for academic work on film. Cinema's international dimension and scope justified a new academic unit: it had artists, various nationalities, and interdisciplinary affiliations. Articulations of film studies' universality came from mainly Anglo-American academics and writers, and in their priorities we see the boundaries and exclusions underwriting the discipline.

Yoshimoto writes, "the disciplinary structure of film studies *demands* the concept of national cinema as part of its strategy of containment" (my emphasis, 36). He makes a historical distinction between the postwar humanists and poststructuralist theory of the 70s, but Yoshimoto agrees with David Bordwell (*Making Meaning*) that both moments are fundamentally about interpretation. Like Bordwell, he questions the hegemony and the banality of Western theory, on which is based all the canonical films, as well as "cinema" as an object, regardless of national, linguistic, and cultural differences.

There is a footnote alluding to cultural imperialism where Yoshimoto makes an analogy to the unequal treaties imposed on Asia by the West. Eurocentric film scholars' analysis of films of whose language, history, and culture they are ignorant is based on the special status won for film studies in the 1960s. Codes of foreign films are unlocked not by Japanese or comparative literature professors, but by film studies, with its radical interdisciplinary approach. Yoshimoto acknowledges that such charges aren't very cogent. If Bordwell, Burch, et al. were dragged into Japanese language boot camp, the field would not change. Japanese film seems to have outlived its usefulness to film studies. On the other hand, what would it take for Japanese studies or comparative literature "to acknowledge [Japanese film] as a legitimate object of scholarship" (43)?

There are no simple answers because such questions involve a sea change in the structure of universities in the twenty-first century. Yoshimoto makes us accountable to Kurosawa by asking how these films function as contemporary works. Kurosawa's films have a "thematic richness and formal complexity [that] defy various types of formulaic explanation circulating in Japanese cinema studies" (378). The relic is not Kurosawa, but auteurism and national cinema. In this absorbing, big book, Yoshimoto has put Kurosawa and Japanese cinema back on the boil.

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Shot in America

Television, the State, and the Rise of Chicano Cinema

By Chon A. Noriega. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000. $49.95 cloth; $19.95 paper.

Chon Noriega's *Shot in America* is a substantial contribution to the study of Chicano cinema, broadcast policy, and cultural politics in the United States. This ambitious work combines the study of "minority" cinematic practice, the role of social movements in mass media, and the rise of Chicano cinema and its position within the academy, national imaginings, and the Chicano intellectual community.

The editor of *Chicanos and Film,* co-editor of *The Ethnic Eye,* and editor of *Aztlan: A Journal of Chicano Studies* (and now the Los Angeles editor of this journal), Noriega has established himself as a leader and curator of Chicano media, as well as a perceptive cultural critic. His *Chicanos and Film: Representation and Resistance* (1992) joined other Chicano cinema histories (*The Bronze Screen, Chicano Cinema: Research Reviews and Resources,* and others) and contributed to the diversity of thought and approaches to Chicano cinematic production. It considered the relationship of Chicano media producers to the New Latin-American cinema, a topic he reexamines in his current work. In *Shot in America,* Noriega breathes life into telecommunication policy analysis and broadcast regulation while also appearing discreetly in the text as a political activist/historian/scholar who becomes part of the narrative he is creating. He ends

his discussion of the "privatized public," a detailed account of the shift of the Latino Consortium from a public broadcasting consortia to a non-profit media arts and production center (the National Latino Communications Center), with a personal note: "I end here unable to separate my own untimely actions in these events" (185). It is surely the complicity of historical and textual construction that fascinates and informs the reader.

While the primary task of the book is to situate the history of Chicano cinema "within the matrix of both social movements and social institutions" (xxxi), its methodology is equally useful. Noriega explores the potential of interdisciplinary research as a way of confronting the contradictions of text-based scholarship that have tended to isolate film scholarship from ongoing media debates. The historiographic question is raised right away: How can this history be told? Two tendencies are immediately at odds—the invisibility of the Chicano civil rights movement within broader histories of the era, and a focus on reading cinematic texts so that "film texts become the sole filter through which all other history is read, rather than being seen as participants within a broader field of discourse and practice"(18). Noriega questions both the derogatory connotation of "mass comm" as a way to dismiss the historiographic value of empirical sociological approaches and the narrow scope of telecommunications research that tends to focus on technological and economic issues. Both tendencies must look beyond the limits of established methodologies in order to expand the field of interpretation. The need to move beyond the "textual as historical" inspires the methodology for this study, an approach that is particularly useful in accounting for the relations between institutions, the state, and industrial practices. Noriega tries "to locate the grounds from which to generalize beyond the particularities of Chicano cinema," to what he calls "minoritarian media and cultural studies" (19).

The first two chapters of the book focus on the interrelations between social movements and the state, and how federal and institutional policies (Noriega includes the role of foundations) defined the terms of inclusion/exclusion for "minorities" within mass media and the shrinking public sphere. It is here that we find a fascinating social history of the development of laws, telecommunications policy, and responses to the demands of the civil rights movement.

The protests against stereotyping in Hollywood films and advertising, and the campaign against the Frito-Lay company in particular for its depiction of an "unshaven, unfriendly, and leering Frito Bandito, who stole Anglo's corn chips at gunpoint" (35), occurred in the context of a shift in federal labor policy. Noriega argues that the 1942–1964 *bracero* program, which provided Mexican farm guest labor throughout the Southwest, "contributed to a broader public discourse—circulating within news and entertainment media and defining social relations—that *deterritorialized* Mexicans and Mexican Americans within the United States even as it also acknowledged the economic necessity of their presence" (39). These issues would influence not only the nature of the discourse of Chicano media practitioners, but also the strategies that emerged in an effort to gain access to media industries.

By combining disciplinary approaches, Noriega proposes "that we look at a given social formation as the product of the relationships *among* the state, social movements, the market, and other institutional actors" (23). The result of such an approach shows that "Chicano cinema emerges as a highly contingent practice within the nation-state rather than a purely contestatory one positioned discursively outside and against the nation-state" (23). By situating Chicano cinema within the institutional practices and regulatory history of broadcast industries, Noriega expands the reading of minority discourses, in this case Chicano, as part of the contradictory discourses of the nation. Strategically then, it shifts the nature of the analysis from one that is strictly oppositional to one that is part of a set of discursive activities. This means that Noriega is able to analyze the effectiveness and weaknesses of organized political and media groups and their role in securing access through protesting, negotiating employment, and finally, entering the field of production.

The argument is most compelling as it follows the redirection of "space politics" (the early attempts to secure a space within the media industry) to that of cultural identity politics (the articulation of a specific identity). Noriega sees this shift as no accident, as it occurs "simultaneously with the shift from student activists to media professionals" (130). It is in following these developments along with the development of media reforms that Noriega provides a construct to generalize beyond Chicano cinema, suggesting a paradigm under which we can determine the moves of other "minoritarian media" practices.

The remaining six chapters tell the history of Chicano cinema by combining the two perspectives of space and identity politics. This historical position follows the early years of protest and the creation of ethnic media programs (New Communications, 1968, and UCLA's Ethno-Communications, 1969–73 in Los Angeles), where future filmmakers would get both inspiration and training; the media reform movement and entrance by Chicanos into network television through the creation of public affairs programming; the shift from network television to public television; the politics of ethnic programming and the dissolution of the public sphere; the gender discourses within and outside Chicano cinema; the internationalization of Chicano cinema through a connection to the New Latin-American Cinema movement; and the professionalization of Chicano media producers.

Noriega provides a wealth of evidence to substantiate the inner workings of institutions and the complexity of regulatory practices. Corporate interests are confirmed with press releases and corporate newsletters, broadcasting policy with media reports, federal regulations with congressional records and government publications, Chicano media history with private papers, memorandums, and personal interviews. While the number of primary sources in itself is a sign of Noriega's indefatigable research, it is the combination of a broad sample of commercial, artistic, legal, and corporate documents that adds depth to this work. It is ironic that

the book's greatest asset can at times make for dense reading. Nonetheless, *Shot in America* is a must in the study of television, historiography, social movements, gender, race, "minoritarian media," telecommunications policy, and film history.

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Vertigo

The Making of a Hitchcock Classic.

By Dan Auiler. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998. $27.95.

Hagiography needs spice. Before achieving sainthood, a devout soul passes a weekend in the desert, tempted by Satan or plagued by inventive devils. Such trials did not afflict the portly bourgeois maestro Alfred Hitchcock. According to Dan Auiler's book about the making of *Vertigo* (1958), Hitchcock produced a film masterpiece through his professionalism and aura as an auteur. "With remarkable ease, some of cinema's finest moments were accomplished that late afternoon" (117), Auiler writes of the scene in Judy's hotel room, where she appears remade as Madeleine, the woman Scottie Ferguson loved and earlier in the picture saw fall to her death. This "remarkable ease" did not, however, prevent the crew from shooting retakes of the mythic rebirth. Auiler presents the masterpiece as the result of day-by-day work: "the systematic, businesslike, matter-of-fact circumstances under which this odd, obsessional, very un-matter-of-fact film was created" (xvii). Some sainthood—often more deviltry—is required for most productions, not just great films.

But while a masterpiece, *Vertigo* is also a conundrum, and Auiler's study unintentionally preserves the conundrum while attempting to explain the masterpiece. A second unforeseen result proceeds from the first. Trying to sustain the Hitchcock aura, Auiler sets the mystique of auteurism in unresolved opposition to the minutiae and larger contexts of filmmaking. He skirts the complexities of mixing authorship with archival details, although the combination is central to his work.

The subtitle of the book, *The Making of a Hitchcock Classic,* leads Auiler to both prosaic and convoluted descriptions. He reports on the making of the film: on this day at this location a particular scene was shot, and the footage grew. On the other hand, Auiler seeks to explain a movie portrayed by Chris Marker in a penetrating essay as "a film which is both typically and untypically Hitchcockian in relation to the rest of his work."[1] Auiler explores how Hitchcock's colleagues, from credited screenwriters Alec Coppel and Samuel Taylor to title sequence designer Saul Bass, managed to combine their abilities at an exceptional pitch. Was the director responsible for collaborations he allowed, even encouraged, but did not oversee?

Auiler echoes Marker's distinction between an auteur's most personal and most uncommon work, but his discussion of the movie does not illuminate why *Vertigo* occupies its disquieting place among the director's films. Does its haunting spirit derive mainly from Hitchcock's desire to recreate his past, in times of bad health and when his independence blossomed from the "prehistoric" (xvii) studio system? Auiler's research reveals the quiddities in the film's production, but not how it stands as Hitchcock's triumphant aberration.

Film scholars and fans will appreciate some of the details Auiler provides. His research, for example, attributes the famous "vertigo shot"—a track out of the camera combined with a zoom forward—not to Hitchcock, or even the extraordinary DP Robert Burks, but to Irmin Roberts, a Paramount second-unit cameraman (66). We are made aware of the film's technical feats, such as the meticulous coordination of lighting between exterior process shots and studio interior in the Argosy Book Shop scene (110). Yet despite its industry ingenuity, *Vertigo* shows an intransigence toward commercial expectations unique to Hitchcock's films. Auiler cites the "awkwardnesses," "longueurs," and "discomforts not originally intended by the director or his crew" in the film (xvi). He does not ask how a commercially savvy director like Hitchcock, in a period of halcyon creativity, could have overlooked the discomforts. He also does not seek to explain how some of the "awkwardnesses" lend the film greater interest. For example, Scottie and Madeleine's first kiss on Cypress Point takes place before a clear process image of waves breaking over rocks. Today the separation between actors and background looks like a dated technique, but in the film's story, the split of actors from background sustains the movie's portrait of entrapping illusions in love. The technique recurs, with greater sophistication, in the celebrated 360-degree shot where Scottie kisses Judy-as-Madeleine and the background revolves from the hotel room to the stable where he and Madeleine last embraced. Auiler furnishes data of technical decisions, but not the uncommon purposes or consequences of their use.[2]

The quotidian frustrations, overwhelming demands, and necessary detachments of film directing are not wholly compatible with auteurist dominion. Dai Vaughan, a film editor and scholar, has argued that "evidence bearing upon how films are made should be rigorously distinguished from evidence bearing upon how they are to be understood. Auteurism . . . does not respect that distinction."[3] Auiler wants Hitchcock's contributions to *Vertigo* to cross from production to reception. He claims "the only way an auteur can survive" is by casting a magnetic field around collaborators, who then have their imaginations freed in "the knowledge that they were serving the Hitchcock vision in their work" (208). But consider if an auteur's voice permeates collaborators with his obsessions in the following quotes:

> "Handle it, Edith . . . I don't care what she [Kim Novak as Madeleine] wears, as long as it's a grey suit" (67; Hitchcock to costume designer Edith Head).

> "Is Bummy [art director Henry Bumstead] a professional? . . . Well, why do I have to look at the [bell tower] set?"[4]
>
> "When . . . we go into the love scene we should let all traffic noise fade, because Mr. [Bernard] Herrman [sic] may have something to say here." (134)

The suffusion of an auteur's vision through production records does not convince. The two jar, not because Hitchcock's collaborators did not respect him, but because the great vision Auiler invests the director with remains intangibly withdrawn from the production details. Auiler's argument rises from murky foundations: the "palpable sense that this story was connected, very deeply, to Hitchcock's own soul" (208). Auiler wants to merge the film's making with its reception as a Hitchcock classic, often in contradiction to his evidence.

Auiler's book exemplifies a current dilemma in cinema studies: the updating of traditional ideas with other scholarly methods. Auiler wants to combine auteurism with fresh research, but his conservative conception of the term hinders the mix. Consider other ways of portraying *Vertigo* than as an effusion from its director's single spirit. The film could have stimulated its makers as an expression of dark emotions usually buried in Hollywood. And the movie's theme, the drive to recreate and perfect the past, could hold uncommon attraction for artists in the repetitive medium of film. Sources can be sought for the film's convulsive feelings and intricate aesthetics outside of one auteur's desires. Adhering to traditional auteurism, Auiler places himself in an awkward position: he does not want the darkness of the film to reflect Hitchcock's interior, yet wishes to claim the picture's power derives from "the personality of the filmmaker we find at its heart. . . . A heart, in other words, like our own" (xviii). By funneling the picture's achievements back to Hitchcock, Auiler diminishes both the director in his visionary solitude and the rare case of *Vertigo*.

Auiler's book promotes the restoration of the film completed in 1996 by Robert A. Harris and James C. Katz. The restored *Vertigo*'s colors look vivid, and the 90-percent of Bernard Herrmann's crucial score that has been reconstituted sounds very well in digital form. Harris and Katz were aware of, and lucidly express, the difficult choices involved in the film's restoration. They chose to digitize the dialogue tracks, knowing when they did so, "you lose the Foley effects and we knew we would have to re-Foley the picture" (197). They defend the *addition* of "one or two effects" (198) in order to cover up original hisses and bangs on the sensitive digital sound tracks. Yet the addition of sound effects conceals a greater harm done to the film. Appreciative viewers recognize how the power of obsession in *Vertigo* depends on Scottie and Madeleine/Judy shutting out mundanity. Remaking Foley effects digitally, like a body's fall or a newspaper's rustle, intrudes them with unwelcome crispness into a world from which they should fall away.

Vertigo: The Making of a Hitchcock Classic has the ambition to reconcile auteurism with daily collaborative creativity. Auiler's book takes us into the film's production history, but does not plumb how its unforgiving romanticism arose or why the movie endures. Once, exiting from a dance club, I received a ticket for a party that recycled *Vertigo*'s opening credits' design of spirals emerging from an eye. The picture haunts both its makers' careers and arts beyond the cinema. Produced because of a director's status, nurtured with his expertise, and buoyed by his collaborators, *Vertigo* nonetheless slips outside of a Hitchcockian halo.

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Notes

1. Chris Marker, "A Free Replay (Notes on *Vertigo*)," in *Projections 4,* ed. John Boorman and Walter Donohue (London: Faber and Faber), 139.
2. In comparison, Eric A. Furie's unpublished essay, "Light in *Vertigo*," demonstrates how the lighting expresses the shifting identities in the film (December 1998, University of Southern California).
3. Dai Vaughn, *Portrait of an Invisible Man: The Working Life of Stewart McAllister* (London: BFI, 1983), 13.
4. Bumstead recalls the quote on the laser disc of the restored film.

Book Notes

Contributors to Book Notes: **Shmuel Ben-Gad**, a librarian at George Washington University, is the author of three bibliographies on Robert Bresson; **Stephen Prince** is the Book Review Editor of *Film Quarterly*.

Ferrara, Serena. *Steadicam: Techniques and Aesthetics*. Boston, MA: Focal Press, 2001. Making its feature film debut in 1976's *Bound for Glory* and *Rocky,* the Steadicam has changed the look of contemporary cinema by offering filmmakers a convenient way of obtaining fluid, flowing camera movements. Harnessed to the camera operator's body, Steadicam is a handheld unit that can execute a variety of conventional and unconventional camera moves. Serena Ferrara gives us a history of inventor Garrett Brown's early prototype devices and their evolution into Steadicam, a description of the device's components and the mechanical principles it employs to create a stable optical perspective, and the techniques of shooting with Steadicam, techniques that resemble dance in that they require the operator to execute precisely choreographed and often balletic maneuvers.

Ferrara writes about her subject from first-hand experience—she has trained to operate Steadicam—and blends this production expertise with a film scholar's analytic interest in the narrative and visual effects that Steadicam aesthetics can achieve. She gives these effects extended attention in a section of the book focusing on semiotics and narrative, where close attention is paid to Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* as a film that exemplifies the application of Steadicam aesthetics. The book's concluding section contains some of its most fascinating information. Here, Ferrara

interviews filmmakers, cinematographers, and camera operators about their experiences using Steadicam. John Carpenter talks about the extended, traveling point-of-view shots in *Halloween* and clarifies that he used a Panaglide (an early Steadicam competitor) to shoot them. Camera operator Larry McConkey provides a fascinating account of the evolution and design of the famous Steadicam shot in *Goodfellas* that follows actor Ray Liotta on a long walk into a nightclub. Cinematographer Vittorio Storaro offers a frank and revealing assessment of the pros and cons of lighting for Steadicam. All of them stress the new possibilities for creative expression that Steadicam offers while cautioning against its potential for overuse and cliché. This unique book about a widely used tool in contemporary film production blends theory and practice to create an insightful portrait of Steadicam and moving camera aesthetics.

Stephen Prince

Reader, Keith. *Robert Bresson*. Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press, 2000. In his introduction, Keith Reader states that there are three "approaches" that will recur in his analysis of the films of Robert Bresson: sadism, Lacanian psychoanalysis, and Catholicism. For the first, Reader relies in part upon Jean-Pierre Oudart, although he brings very little solid biographical or filmic evidence to justify this distasteful approach. For example, in his discussion of the director's first feature film, *Les Anges du peché,* in which a character winds up dying after being caught in a rainstorm, the author refers to a scene where the rain beats down upon her face and claims it reveals "a harsh penetrative sexualised sensuality" This seems farfetched.

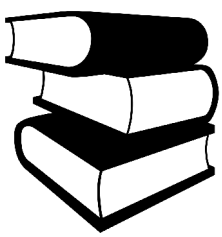
Bresson's films, with their eschewal of acting and ascriptions of motivation, are anti-psychological, but Reader believes that Bresson's method in using models (the word Bresson uses to refer to his actors) is somehow similar to the psychoanalytical process. Yet this ignores both the particularities of the filmmaker's tools (camera and sound recorder) and the results Bresson achieves, namely a refined sense of mystery (including, but not limited to, the people depicted), rather than psychological diagnosis and explanation. In his analysis of *Une Femme douce*—about a young wife who commits suicide and her husband's attempt to understand it—Reader cites Oudart's use of Lacan in explaining it as the relationship of desire on the part of the husband and demand for love on the part of the wife. Yet this fails to account for much in the film. The Lacanian explanation of Oudart is unconvincing in part because it omits so much we have seen in the film. As Tom Milne has written of the wife's suicide, "Was it because he loved her too much or too little? The extraordinary thing about the film is that any or all of these interpretations can be read into it."

Reader's use of psychology is not limited to Lacan: without evidence, he diagnoses the central figure of *Pickpocket* as a victim of "an all-devouring self-loathing," and infers the same for Chantal in *Diary of a Country Priest*. Similarly, he espies a Freudian death wish in a villainous character in *Au Hasard Balthazar*. What is odd is that these barren psychological attempts to analyze the films are accompanied by acknowledgments of their resolutely anti-psychological nature. It seems to me this book would have avoided much futility if the author had resisted his temptation to try to fit Bresson's anti-psychological films onto a Procrustean psychoanalytical bed, and had devoted more attention to what is in fact the nature of these austerely mysterious films and the way they work.

The third approach, Catholicism, at least corresponds to something real in the films, for their power to evoke a sense of awe-inspiring mystery (or what some call the spiritual), is commonly acknowledged. It is worth noting, though, that in only two of the films (*Les Anges du peché* and *Diary of a Country Priest*) and possibly one other (*Le Proces de Jeanne d'Arc*) do specifically Christian elements play a prominent role. Basically, the sense of hidden realities evoked in the films is as consonant with, say, a type of deism as much as it is with Christianity, despite the Christian coloration that is often present.

On the positive side, Reader's summaries of the films are on the whole clear, and when he does discuss the more formal elements of the films, he shows insight. This is especially so in his section on *L'Argent,* the best in the book. Reader has a very good command of the relevant literature, and his writing can rise to a crisp eloquence, as when he writes of *Lancelot du Lac,* "History, lurking in ambush, has destroyed the time of myth." Lurking within this book are elements that might have given us a much-needed, rigorous, insightful study, in English, of this tough, rigorous, unique filmmaker. Unfortunately, this book fails to be such a study.

Shmuel Ben-Gad



Abstracts, FQ 55-1

Mark Rappaport, "I, Jean Seberg"

In "I, Jean Seberg," author/filmmaker Mark Rappaport (director of *Rock Hudson's Home Movies* [see *FQ* vol. 49, no. 4]), discusses how he came to make his film, *From the Journals of Jean Seberg*. The essay includes anecdotes that he unearthed about Seberg after he had completed the film, as well as the original mini-essays he wrote while preparing for it—about Jane Fonda, Clint Eastwood, Joan of Arc, *Lilith*, Godard and Gorin's *Letter to Jane*, and the Kuleshov effect. Parts of these essays were used, in a different form, in the final film. If you didn't see *From the Journals of Jean Seberg*, this essay might make you want to. If you saw the film and liked it, you'll love this piece.

Richard Neupert, "Trouble in Watermelon Land: George Pal and the Little Jasper Cartoons"

What should film studies do with blatantly racist cartoons from Hollywood's past? This article investigates one test case, George Pal's Little Jasper cartoon series from the 1940s—which provides an array of offensive racist stereotypes—arguing that film historians must confront both its racist strategies and its fascinating mode of production. The cartoons were created from 3D models with exquisite depth and color at a time when cel animation was the norm. Pal's works are complex ideological and aesthetic products that deserve to be studied and debated within the animation canon.

Susan Felleman, "Dirty Pictures, Mud Lust, and Abject Desire: Myths of Origin and the Cinematic Object"

In three films about artist couples—*Artemisia* (1997), *Camille Claudel* (1988), and *Life Lessons* (1989)—cinema is shown allegorically through art as the progeny of sexual coupling. In each, the nature of the relationship—its romantic, psychosocial, and sexual aspects—suggests larger issues relating to the experience of film, as though each was a myth of the origins of film, or a primal scene. The couples personify the ultimately erotic act of filmmaking even as they reveal the peculiar sensibilities of each film's maker, be those involved with the quasi-pornographic experience of looking, the fetishistic interest in technique and handling, or heroic passions and valorization of gesture.

Rob Content, Tim Kreider, and Boyd White, "*O Brother, Where Art Thou?*"

Beneath its broad caricatures and genre-bending, *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* has an earnest, Depression-era agenda. Its episodic plot can be understood as a series of moral trials in which the solidarity of the poor is tested by various threats and temptations of the rich and powerful. The most crucial of these tests is put not to the film's protagonists, but to its audience: Will we see, as clearly as do the three white fugitives, that their fate is inextricably bound to that of their black brethren?

James Morrison, "*The House of Mirth*"

The great British filmmaker Terence Davies adapts Edith Wharton's American classic, *The House of Mirth*, and the sensibilities of author and filmmaker mesh unexpectedly, producing a film of uncommon delicacy. Simulating the traditional costume drama as it has been codified by such directors as James Ivory, Davies actually works against the most entrenched conventions of the genre by countering naturalism with artifice. This review of Davies's film examines the aesthetic strategies of this extraordinary adaptation, and places the film in the context of Davies's work and contemporary art cinema more generally.